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The Cresset (Vol. XLV, No. 3)

Valparaiso University

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE, THE ARTS, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS / JANUARY, 1982

THE CRESSET

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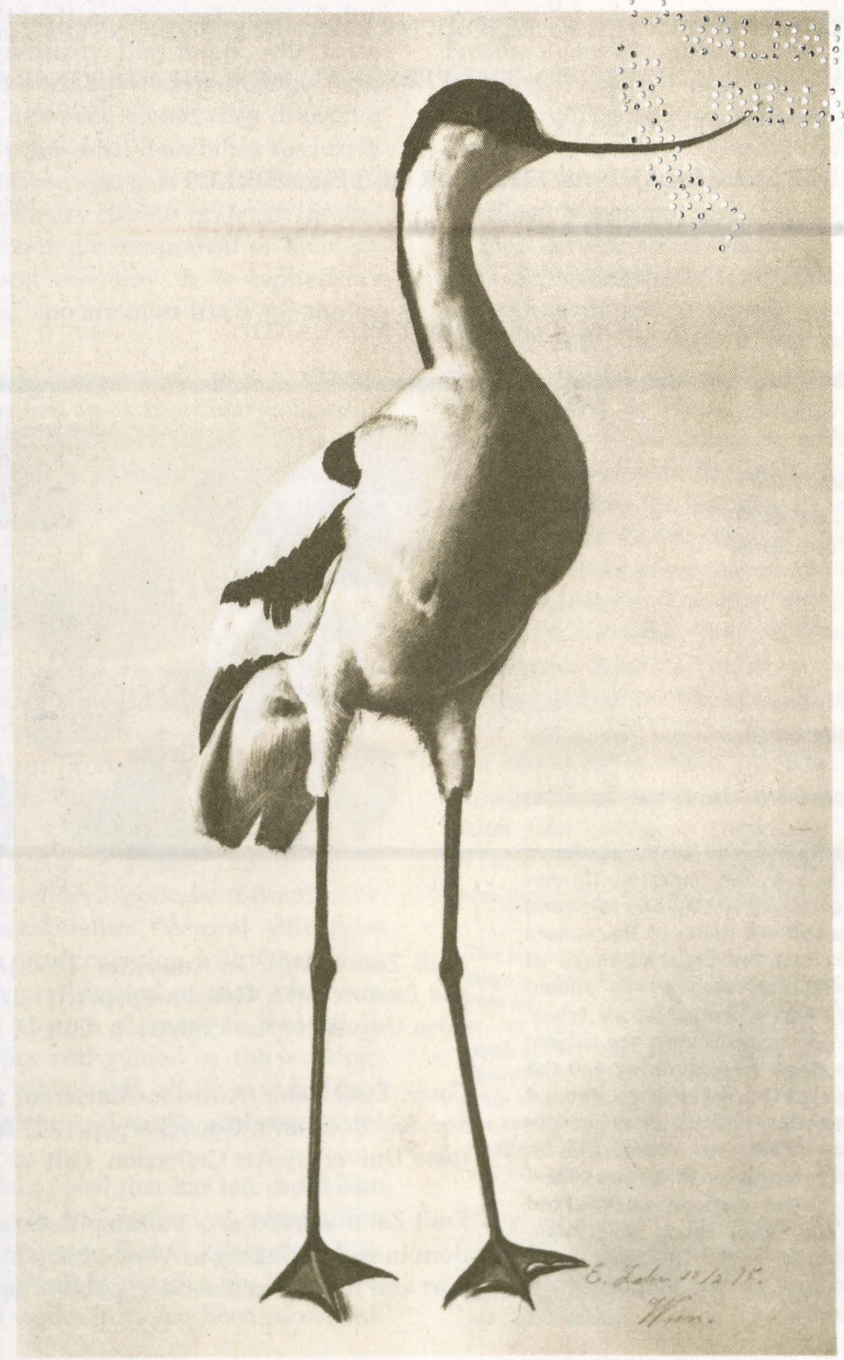

THE CRESSET *Valparaiso University Valparaiso, Indiana 46383*

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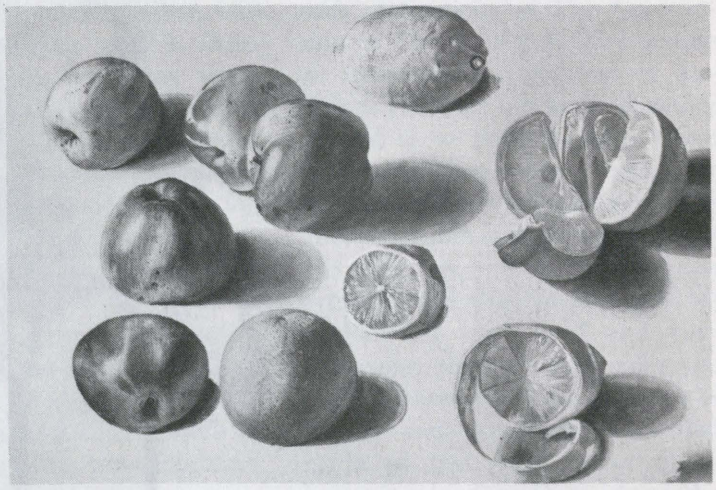
JANUARY, 1982 Vol. XLV, No. 3 ISSN 0011-1198

Contributors

THE CRESSET is published monthly during the academic year, September through May, by the Valparaiso University Press as a forum for scholarly writing and informed opinion. The views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the preponderance of opinion at Valparaiso University. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor and accompanied by return postage. Letters to the Editor for publication are subject to editing for brevity. The *Book Review Index* and the *American Humanities Index* list Cresset reviews. Second class postage paid at Valparaiso, Indiana. Regular subscription rates: one year—$6.50; two years—$11.50; single copy—$.85. Student subscription rates: one year—$3.00; single copy—$.50.



Emil Zahn (Austrian-American, 1850-1893), *Apples, Oranges and Lemons,* 1875, Gouache/paper, 11 1/2" x 17 1/8". Valparaiso University Art Collection. Gift of Irene Zahn.

Cover: Emil Zahn (Austrian-American, 1850-1893), *Study of a Standing Bird,* 1875, Gouache/paper, 17 5/8" x 11 1/8". Valparaiso University Art Collection. Gift of Irene Zahn.

Emil Zahn worked as a building decorator painting decorations in such buildings as Vanderbilt's Marble Palace in Newport and the Worcester, MA, public library.

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Comment on Contemporary Affairs by the Editor

The Morality of Capitalism

Through most of recent history, capitalism has been the economic system that dare not speak its name. Americans, who have been in practice the most enthusiastic capitalists of modern times, have gone to considerable lengths to avoid applying the label to themselves. Asked to define just what it is that constitutes the American way of life, most Americans rely on such terms as freedom, democracy, individualism, or equal opportunity. If pushed for greater specificity, they might, with some hesitation, refer to the free enterprise system. Only with the greatest reluctance, however, would they designate their system or themselves as what it and they so clearly are: capitalist. The American system is one of democratic capitalism, and yet ordinary citizens prefer to ignore, if not quite deny, the economic component of their society's model of political economy. It is capitalism's enemies, not its friends, who are most likely to employ the term.

At one level, this might seem an odd state of affairs. Capitalism, after all, has had an extraordinary record of success. The prosperity of the West has been built upon it. It has brought more wealth to more people than any economic arrangement ever conceived. And capitalism has accomplished this while providing a social context that tends, more often than not, to the establishment of political freedom.

Yet outside the confines of the business community or the textbooks of neoclassical economists, capitalism seldom receives the praise it would seem to merit, and the reasons for that lack of appreciation are not difficult to discern. Capitalism produces wealth and allows for freedom, but it offers little or no opportunity for moral heroism. Indeed, it seems rooted in personal qualities quite the opposite of heroic. Adam Smith, capitalism's ultimate defender, spoke in distinctly unflattering terms of the capitalists' "natural selfishness and rapacity," of their preoccupation with "their own conveniency" and "the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires" (though of course he went on to argue that taken together and guided by the workings of the free market's invisible hand, all those individual acts of selfishness led in the end to the achievement of the common good).

It is this lack of moral appeal that has left capitalism at such a disadvantage in its ideological competition with socialism, a disadvantage that is otherwise difficult to account for. Socialism in practice has had a record as unimpressive as capitalism's has been successful. (Socialism is here defined in its dictionary sense of the public ownership and control of the means of production. If the term *socialist* is to retain any descriptive precision, it should not casually be attached, as it so often is, to Western European or North American systems that would better be designated as welfare-state capitalist or social democratic.) In both advanced and developing societies, socialist economic systems have produced less well than comparable capitalist ones, and they have in every case been accompanied by political repression. Freedom may not always follow on capitalism, but, at least on the record to date, it never follows on socialism.

Yet for all its failures, socialism retains its stature, at least among intellectuals and moralists, as a moral ideal. It is presented as what man at his best might attain to. Socialism is seen as more than an economic system: to its most fervent adherents, it is a way of life. (Capitalism's defenders rarely burden their system with such grand imaginings: as already noted, Americans speak often of their *democratic* way of life, almost never of their *capitalist* way of life.) Socialism has frequently been depicted by liberal clergymen as applied Christianity; only a few eccentric conservative churchmen have attempted a similar exaltation of capitalism.

It is precisely the inability of capitalism to compete with socialism on the level of moral yearning that has led some recent apologists to attempt to rehabilitate its moral reputation. The most notable of these is George Gilder, whose widely-noticed *Wealth and Poverty* stands as the most ambitious effort to rescue capitalism from the charge that it represents the institutionalization of greed and self-interest. Capitalism works, Gilder says in a recent summary of his book's thesis, *not* because "it miraculously transmutes personal avarice and ambition into collective prosperity" but rather because "it calls forth, propagates, and relies upon the best and most generous of human qualities":

> The process of capitalist investment, for all the obvious differences, bears a close relationship to the ritual gift-giving that anthropologists have discovered to be universal in primitive life. These gifts are not offered without the expectation of a return; the outcome depends on the voluntary responses of others. In order to make a successful gift, the giver must first suppress his own appetites (save) while at the same time figuring out the desires of the recipient. To the extent the recipients value the gifts more than the givers, the profits of the system—in this case, the circles of human sympathy—will expand.
>
> The giving impulse in modern capitalism is no less prevalent and important, no less central to all creative and productive activity, than in a primitive tribe. Look at the unending offerings of entrepreneurs: investing capital, creating products, building businesses, inventing jobs, accumulating inventories. These contributions—all long before

any return is received, all without any assurance that the enterprise will not fail—constitute a pattern of giving that dwarfs in extent and in practical generosity any primitive rite of exchange. Giving is the vital impulse and moral center of capitalism; give and you will be given unto is its fundamental law.

The argument is intriguing but not, in the end, persuasive. The capitalist's "gifts," even if understood in terms of ritual, have to do with calculated risk rather than with "generosity." Capitalism rests not on "give and you will be given unto" but on "risk and you may be rewarded." If the language of greed and rapacity judges capitalism too harshly, talk of gift-giving and generosity sentimentalizes it.

We can understand (and sympathize with) Mr. Gilder's desire to establish a moral defense for capitalism and thus "close the schism between Western morality and Western economics." He is right to be concerned with the cost to Western morale that follows from the widespread denigration of capitalist values, especially as those values are measured against the presumed moral splendor of socialism. But when he argues that to be involved in capitalist activities is to be "engaged in the highest of human callings: the service of others and the fulfillment of faith," he has moved beyond evidence and common sense to the realm of myth and fantasy. To resist the notion that capitalists are devils we need not pretend that they are saints.

The case for capitalism—a case that includes but does not solely rest on moral judgments—should begin and end with less elevated claims. We have already alluded briefly to two of them: capitalism's economic vitality and its bias in the direction of free institutions. It seems curious that moralists should offhandedly dismiss an economic system whose productive capacities have had so beneficial an effect on the lives of millions of ordinary men and women. If the West, under capitalism, has not abolished poverty, it has come nearer to doing so than has anyone else under any other system. (Those who credit the welfare state rather than capitalism with the reduction of poverty might reflect for a moment on what it is that creates the surplus out of which welfare is provided. In any case, the stimulation by capitalism of overall economic growth has done more to aid the mass of people than has the welfare state.)

For all of socialism's eloquent egalitarian sentiments, it has accomplished far less in the way of alleviation of human suffering than has capitalism. The capitalist's claim that socialism provides an excellent mechanism for the equal distribution of poverty rests on what is by now a considerable accumulation of evidence. Capitalism's historical and contemporary imperfections are well-known: exploitation, wastefulness, uneven development, tendencies to oligopoly, unequal distribution of wealth and income. But no society undergoing economic modernization under capitalism has experienced anything like the appalling human costs that have accompanied the building of socialism in nations like the Soviet Union, China, or any number of Third World countries.

The record with respect to political freedom is much the same. We all know that many capitalist societies are oppressive and authoritarian, some cruelly so. But we also know that of the relative handful of societies in the world in which civil liberties, democratic freedoms, and human rights flourish, all have economic systems that are essentially capitalist in structure. (The Scandinavian countries, which are certainly free and democratic, are sometimes referred to as having traveled a "middle way" between capitalism and socialism, but that middle way leans considerably closer to the capitalist side of the road than to the side paved by Karl Marx and those who have come after him.) Because capitalist societies tend to separate economics and politics, they are less susceptible to the temptations of power than are socialist regimes, in which the two are inseparable. Critics frequently point out the high degree of concentration of private power in modern capitalist economies. But concentrations of power are inescapable in industrial society, and the relatively pluralistic nature of democratic capitalism disperses that power far more effectively than any collectivist alternative.

It is capitalism's great benefit—and this is the point Mr. Gilder does not seem to grasp—that its moral claims remain more modest than those of socialism. Capitalism recommends itself to us precisely because it is just an economic system and not a way of life or a moral ideal. Because it makes no attempt to be all-encompassing, it leaves room for a whole host of interests, activities, associations, virtues, values, and beliefs outside itself. It does not seek to monopolize our lives and loyalties, and its successful implementation does not depend on our being other than what we are. We hear often of the "new socialist man" that Marxism or one of its derivatives is supposed to create; capitalism has no such utopian pretensions.

The socialist ideal of egalitarian altruism demands of man more than his moral constitution will allow: it requires a regimen of perpetual moral heroism. Since few of us are capable of conducting our lives at that constant pitch, those who would institute a socialist order can only do so through massive coercion, which corrupts the leaders even as it oppresses the led. It is the incompatability between socialism's moral requirements and the flawed human material with which any political order must work that explains why democratic socialism remains a social ideal rather than a political reality.

Capitalism, by contrast, takes people as they are rather than as we would have them be and, as Adam Smith in-

Democratic capitalism can withstand the moral scrutiny of all save those for whom social standards are set not by the realities of the world we know and inhabit but by visions of the heavenly city.

dicated, harnesses their inevitable self-interest to social benefit. Critics of capitalism argue that its ethos of competition and individual self-advancement licenses unbridled greed and social savagery; they can only conceive of a capitalist society as a Darwinian jungle. But modern capitalism—as modified, regulated, and restrained by democratic politics—has demonstrated that it is not necessarily antithetical to social decency. American economic life has its unlovely aspects, but it is not simply a jungle in which only the fit survive. Moreover, capitalism has demonstrated its capacity for evoking creative human self-expression. If the qualities of imagination, resourcefulness, optimism, and confidence that it encourages and rewards are not the most sublime of human endowments, they do work for both individual happiness and social development.

All this being said, important qualifiers must be added. Capitalism is not sacrosanct. It is morally defensible in general, but that broad moral acceptability does not bestow a mantle of inviolability upon laissez-faire economics. We are properly skeptical toward those who devise what are in effect theologies of socialism, and we should be equally suspicious of those who would do the same for capitalism. Free-market relations carry no divine sanction, and schemes of government regulation and planning should be judged on their efficacy, not on whether or not they violate some presumed absolute individual right to control of one's own property.

It may be that a capitalism overburdened with controls and restrictions will work less well than it otherwise would. If that is so, such controls and restrictions can legitimately be opposed for their negative effects on the well-being of the men and women who suffer when the economy falters. But in our current mood of suspicion toward government regulation, we should never forget the crucial humanizing effects that democratic intervention has had on capitalist societies. A capitalism divorced from social concern *can* be a moral monstrosity. Even if it were the case (as it is not) that the free market distributed its rewards in perfect correlation with individual talent and effort, we would still be morally required to care for those who lacked the requisite economic skills to keep up with the rest of society. Unrestrained capitalism *can* turn into a social jungle, and, for Christians at least, any such social order must be intolerable.

(Though this does not mean that the government must be the sole or even primary dispenser of charity, or that the concept of charity necessarily entails an elaborate system of economic and social "rights." In the field of social welfare, claims of moral necessity cannot automatically override considerations of prudence and practicability. Part of our moral duty is to find out what does and does not in fact *work* for the general welfare.)

Social constructs should be our servants rather than our masters. It is of little use to discuss economic or political systems in purely abstract terms. If we are sensible, we will make our judgments concerning capitalism or socialism on the basis of the effects they have on people's lives rather than on the theoretical or moral elegance of the models their apologists provide for them. From such an empirical perspective, democratic capitalism can withstand the moral scrutiny of all save those for whom social standards are set not by the realities of the world we know and inhabit but by visions of the heavenly city. Capitalism is not a perfect system, and we should always be open to the possibility that something better might someday supersede it; but in the meantime, it is worth defending against the ideologues and perfectionists who are its inevitable enemies.

Concerning the Moral Majority

We have not written before now on the subject of the Moral Majority for at least two reasons. In the first place, the topic has been so thoroughly, not to say exhaustively, discussed elsewhere that we felt our subscribers might be no more anxious to read yet another commentary on the matter than we were eager to write one. In the second place, our views on the MM are so ambivalent that we feared that any editorial comment might come out as meaningless blather. But it is by now past time to face up to editorial responsibilities, disregard the problem of MM-overload, and try to impose some order on the tangle of contradictory reactions we (and possibly others) have experienced on the issue.

The problem begins with definition. Strictly construed, the term *Moral Majority* refers simply to the particular politico-religious group headed by the Reverend Jerry Falwell. In popular usage, however, it takes in the whole range of individuals and groups who make up the politicized segment of the evangelical religious right. For many liberals, it has become a term of opprobrium that encompasses, in shorthand form, all manifestations of cultural conservatism. For our present purposes, we shall adopt popular usage, i.e., that which connotes the evangelical/fundamentalist Protestant right. (The pitfalls of such usage should be noted: the Reverend Billy Graham, whom no one has ever accused of being either a theological or political liberal, has spoken out against the politico-religious right's tendency to specify the will of God on particular political issues, and he is not at all alone among theological conservatives in holding such views. Indeed, the Moral Majority represents a deviation from the dominant tradition of evangelical/fundamentalist American Protestantism, which has been more often apolitical than politically activist.)

We are uncomfortable with the Moral Majority's too-easy certainties, and we cannot share the blessed assurance with which its adherents discern the Lord's will in the details of social affairs.

If we understand the impulse behind the Moral Majority correctly, there is much that concerns them that ought to concern the rest of us as well. One need not agree with the MM's stand on all issues (as we emphatically do not) to share their discontent with many of the cultural currents in American life today. There is nothing intrinsically reactionary in supporting traditional values relating to family, country, and religion, or in opposing such dubious fruits of modernity as permissive sexual mores, gay rights (when taken to require moral acceptance of homosexual behavior), abortion on demand, refusal of responsibility for personal actions (the devil—or society—made me do it), unrestricted circulation of pornography, or the more extreme versions of women's liberation (e.g., those rooted in hatred of men or wedded to the ideal of an androgynous society). Those of us for whom not everything in contemporary culture is automatically to be applauded should see to it that our concerns do not fall by default entirely into the hands of fringe political or religious groups. (Recent studies indicate that people with evangelical/fundamentalist religious views are only marginally more conservative on socio-economic issues than are members of liberal churches; it is their perspective on cultural questions that sharply distinguishes the evangelicals from mainstream Protestant opinion.)

Disagreement on specific issues aside, many of us have problems with the manner in which members of the Moral Majority address the questions that concern them. Some of what they say is mean-spirited; much of it is ignorant; most all of it is unsophisticated. Matters that require careful distinctions get reduced to crude generalizations, and moral niceties get lost sight of in a desperate scramble for moral certainties. Thus, for example, even many of us unpersuaded by the moral claims behind the gay rights movement wanted to distance ourselves from the gay-bashing overtones of the Anita Bryant anti-homosexual crusade in Florida and elsewhere. This is not mere intellectual fastidiousness; the integrity (or lack of it) with which positions are advanced can never entirely be separated from the substance of the positions themselves. The social health of a society depends as much on how arguments are conducted as on who wins the arguments (especially since large social questions are seldom definitively won or lost).

The actual strength of the Moral Majority is difficult to measure. Immediately after the 1980 elections, it made extravagant claims about its influence in defeating a number of liberal Democratic Senators it had targeted for special attention. Those claims were picked up in fear and trembling by the MM's liberal opponents, most notably Norman Lear, the television producer, who claimed to see in the MM a mortal threat to American "pluralism, diversity, and tolerance," and who founded an organization, People for the American Way (love that name), whose sole reason for being is to save the nation from the "radical religious right." (One wonders where Mr. Lear's concern for pluralism and tolerance was hiding during all those years when the National Council of Churches and other liberal religious groups were pronouncing their anathemas on all those who failed to support *their* versions of political moral rectitude.)

Definitive studies of the effects of the Moral Majority on the 1980 election results are not yet available, but preliminary evidence strongly suggests that its influence has been vastly exaggerated by friends and enemies alike. (See, for example, the article, "The Election & the Evangelicals," by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab in the March, 1981 issue of *Commentary.*) It turns out that the average percentage decline in votes between 1974 and 1980 among the Northern Democratic Senators targeted for defeat by religious and other right-wing groups was virtually identical with the average decline among untargeted Northern Democratic Senators. On the Presidential level, a slightly smaller percentage of born-again white Protestants voted for conservative Ronald Reagan than did non-born-again white Protestants, and Jimmy Carter lost more support between 1976 and 1980 among Jews, Catholics, and mainstream Protestants than he did among the evangelicals. Carter and the liberal Democratic Senators were indeed caught in a conservative surge, but that surge does not appear to have been the product of a new radical religious right.

Influential or not, how should the Moral Majoritarians be assessed? We end as we began, with uncertainity. We do not find them the great national peril that others do. We understand and in some ways share their concerns, and we agree that those concerns should have received greater attention than they have. The "secular humanists" who loom so large in the MM's catalog of evils *do* dominate much of the nation's elite intellectual culture, and they *have* tended to treat the discontents of religious conservatives with incomprehension, indifference, or contempt.

But in the last analysis, the Moral Majority embodies a temper foreign to us. It speaks with a voice that is too often harsh or hysterical. We are uncomfortable with the MM's too-easy certainties, and we cannot share the blessed assurance with which its adherents discern the Lord's will in the details of mundane affairs. There are items on the Moral Majority's agenda worthy of notice, but those items should become the common concern of all of us, and not be left to the tender mercies of those whose anxieties and intensities outrun their wisdom.

South African Pass Laws have been called "the most vicious, unchristian system of human control ever devised by man against man, excluding neither Nazi Germany nor Stalinist Russia."

Christians and South Africa

The Dilemmas of Responsible Choice

Arthur Keppel-Jones

How should Christians react to what is happening in South Africa? This is a practical question, because in many countries, including the United States, people are regularly being asked to use their collective power to influence public policies in this matter.

We are forced to make a choice. Churches, business corporations, universities, and governments are asked to withdraw any investments they may have in South Africa, and to refrain from further investment. Governments are asked to reduce or cut off trade with that country, even to sever all communications, cultural contacts, and other ties with it, to refuse to recognize South African passports, and to support U.N. resolutions in favor of various sanctions and boycotts. It is open to individuals to practice their own boycott by refusing to buy South African goods if any are available. Academic exchanges and sporting contacts can be prevented. We can choose to support any of these measures by our personal decisions, by signing petitions, and by lobbying our legislators.

Or we can choose the opposite course of tolerating, or even promoting, any or all of these kinds of contact.

The first question that this problem provokes is: what is all the fuss about? What have the rest of us got to do with South African affairs? Why are we called upon to make decisions about them?

A Catalog of Government Oppressions

It is easy to make a catalog of the oppressions, cruelties, and discriminations practiced by the South African government against the black population. Its control over their movements, activities, opportunities, employment, and rights to reside or be in any place has been so extensive that the late Chief Albert Luthuli accused it of "nationalizing the institution of slavery." The basis of the institution is the Pass Laws; it is by means of his "Pass," which every African must carry, that every aspect of his life is manipulated. A very representative black leader, Dr. Ntatho Motlana, has called the Pass Laws "the most vicious, unchristian system of human control ever devised by man against man, excluding neither Nazi Germany nor Stalinist Russia."

A recent example will illustrate the point. According to the government's blueprint, the western Cape Province should be out of bounds to blacks; for curious historical and ideological reasons the field of non-white labor in that region is reserved for the Colored (i.e. mixed race) people. As economic forces dictate otherwise, great numbers of blacks are admitted to the area to meet the needs of employers, but their families, if not themselves employed, are excluded. Last July the police combed through the black townships of Langa and Nyanga on the outskirts of Cape Town and removed a number of women and children who were found living with their husbands and fathers. The women erected makeshift huts in the neighborhood. The police moved in, expelled the occupants, and burned the huts. As the women and children huddled outside in the cold and rain (it was the southern winter), white sympathizers, including clergy, arrived with food and blankets for the sufferers. The police barred the way to them, warned photographers off, and fired tear gas into the crowd. In

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Arthur Keppel-Jones *was born in South Africa. From the University of Cape Town he went, as a Rhodes Scholar, to New College, Oxford. Returning to South Africa he held teaching posts in history in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and in the University of Natal. In 1959 he emigrated with his family to Canada to become a professor of history at Queen's University, Kingston. Since emigrating he has returned once, in 1972, for a visit to his native country. He has traveled in the United States on a Carnegie travel fellowship and has taught for brief periods at Duke University and at the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University. In addition to numerous articles, he has published several books on South African history and politics:* When Smuts Goes; Friends or Foes?; South Africa, A Short History; Thomas Philipps, 1820 Settler: His Letters *(edited); and (forthcoming) a major work entitled* Rhodes and Rhodesia, The White Conquest of Zimbabwe, 1884-1902. *Finally, he is a committed Christian and serves as a subdeacon in the Anglican Church of Canada.*

The list of oppressions is long, and it is not only blacks that are oppressed. The government has a handy weapon in "banning," a sentence imposed by ministerial fiat, not by the courts.

due course the women and children were forced into buses which took them about 800 miles and dumped them in their so-called "homeland" of the Transkei. There being neither jobs, food, nor husbands there, the deported people began to return to Cape Town and Square One.

This is just one example of what is called "endorsing out." There are many ways in which an African can get into trouble for being where his Pass does not allow him to be, or for not being able to produce his Pass. In 1978, 275,000 people were arrested for offenses of this kind.

The list of oppressions is long, and it is not only blacks that are oppressed. The government has a handy weapon in "banning," a sentence imposed by ministerial fiat, not by the courts. The terms of the banning order vary; they always include a severe restriction of movement and a night curfew, and may include 24-hour house arrest. They put severe restrictions on social contacts, such as not being able to be in the company of more than one other person at a time, and never with another banned person. (If husband and wife are both banned, they require a permit to be able to communicate with each other.) Those banned are visited regularly by the police, or have to report to the police every day. Nothing that a banned person says or writes, or has ever said or written, may be published. For public purposes he ceases to exist. This penalty is commonly imposed on outspoken opponents of the regime. It is often used as a means of intimidation, so that successive presidents of the (in practice, though not in intention, white) National Union of South African Students, including the present one, have been banned.

Solving Problems with Bulldozers

There is a severe housing shortage. Some Colored and Indian families have moved into available houses or apartments in areas earmarked, under the Group Areas Act, as white. This has happened with the approval of the property owners and the neighbors, but not of the government. The problem is being "solved" by removals and by bulldozers.

It is the blacks, however, that suffer most, both from the laws and from their administration by officials and police. The death of Stephen Biko while under "interrogation" is only the most notorious of the police actions of this type. As deaths and torture at the hands of the police have increased, the laws prohibiting the publication of news or photographs of police action have become more comprehensive.

Education has long been racially segregated. Expenditure per white student in schools has averaged about ten times the expenditure per black student. In 1980 the teacher-student ratio in white schools was 1:18.6; in black schools 1:45.9. Teachers in black schools have much lower qualifications than in white, and the control of the central government over black education is pervasive. These are the facts behind successive riots and "school boycotts" by children, and the ferocious reaction of the government and its agents to them.

One could go on to other topics: detention without trial, capital punishment (133 death sentences carried out in 1979), press censorship, the far-reaching effects of the Group Areas Act, the establishment of "homelands" as independent states (so that people with ethnic roots in them, though actually living and working in "white" South Africa, become aliens there), the continued imposition of "separate but (*legally*) unequal" facilities in many spheres, racial discrimination in employment, and, underlying all, the white monopoly of political power.

The list could be greatly extended, and the items described in more detail. But for the present purpose this must suffice. The South African system is unchristian, cruel, evil. There would seem to be a case for some action by the Christians of the world.

To such charges the government and its supporters have two kinds of answer, or defense: (i) the government admits that there have been injustices, but it is doing its best to remove them, and to abolish all discrimination and oppression; and (ii), why pick on South Africa? Many other countries, and specifically most countries of the Third World, have far worse records.

These two kinds of riposté deserve careful examination, and it would be unwise to decide on an appropriate Christian attitude to South Africa without looking at them closely.

There is a lot of evidence that conditions for some Africans, in some respects, have improved in recent years; and the same is true of the Colored and Indian communities. The improvement is most obvious with respect to employment opportunities and labor organizations. One of the first things to strike a visitor to South Africa after an absence of ten or twenty years is the number of jobs filled formerly by whites but now by people of other colors. By one calculation, the average *real* wage or salary of whites dropped by 6.2 per cent between 1974 and 1978, while that of blacks rose by 23.3 per cent. (These figures must be seen in relation to the wide gap between the starting points in the two cases.)

A beginning has been made (in 1980), by official approval of some black applications for apprenticeship, of putting Africans on the track leading to regular qualifications in skilled trades. Since 1979 blacks have been able to form registered (legally recognized) trade unions, with the right to participate in the industrial conciliation system and to strike.

In a lurching fashion—two steps forward, one step back—South Africa is breaking down the system of "petty apartheid" that has kept the races strictly segregated in the past.

In 1981, compulsory education for blacks was introduced in certain areas and was to be extended to the rest of the country as facilities became available. For several years white private schools have admitted a number of non-white students, with or without official approval. Now the right of private schools to do this has been made legal; but the new law includes a threat, not spelt out in detail, of closer government supervision and control.

The most mind-boggling area of reform is what is called "petty apartheid"—segregation in hotels, restaurants, clubs, buses, theaters, parks, beaches, and other places of public resort. Not long ago racial segregation, with few exceptions, was the rule in all such cases. Now, in a lurching fashion—two steps forward, one step back—it is being broken down piecemeal by permits granted by the appropriate authorities. One of the reasons for this is South Africa's need of diplomatic contacts. Some of the diplomats coming to the country are not white, and if these were subjected to the old-style segregation practices the contacts would be short-lived. The white South African public, however, is much more concerned about international contacts in sport than in diplomacy. So, in the same lurching fashion, racial segregation in sports clubs and teams is crumbling. But it will have to crumble much further before South Africa and New Zealand can play rugby without causing a major international crisis.

Many more examples of improvements could be given, but it is more important to look at these few examples, their implications and their limitations, in perspective.

Changes such as these have been condemned as "cosmetic." They may look good to foreign visitors and they remove a few unnecessary irritants, but, it is said, they have not made the slightest dent in the real bulwarks of white supremacy. These are the Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act, the prohibition of interracial marriage and extramarital relations, and, above all, the white monopoly of political power. The criticism is sound, except that it makes no allowance for the concessions in the area of job opportunities and trade unionism. However restricted these concessions may be, they have given to the blacks a small instalment of power. What caused the concessions to be made was economic necessity. South Africa is a rapidly developing industrial power. It is very rich in natural resources. It is rich also in human resources, but because of the policy and tradition of racial discrimination its future growth is now seriously threatened by a lack of skilled manpower. The manpower is there, but most of it has been denied access to the skill. The business community puts steady pressure on the government to make up the shortfall by drawing blacks into skilled occupations.

As I write these words, the press reports a meeting of "about 600 top industrialists" with Prime Minister Botha. They told him that "only in the field of industrial relations, where blacks have been allowed in the past two years to form trade unions, has progress been made." They now demanded that segregation and discrimination be broken down in "three other main sectors—mobility of labor, black education with particular reference to technical education, and housing." The speakers at this meeting included "the heads of the most powerful industrial and financial groups and a number of black businessmen." The Prime Minister showed no willingness to accede to these demands; but he can be in no doubt that the alternative is an economic crisis of catastrophic proportions.

Reform from Rapid Industrial Growth

At this point we pause to make a tentative judgment. The cause of reform in the field of labor has been rapid industrial growth. The prospect of continued growth and prosperity if the further reforms suggested by the business leaders are made, and of depression and collapse if they are not, forces these leaders to use all the pressure they command to induce the government to move in the direction they have indicated. If these reforms are made (in education, housing, and mobility), pressure for change in other areas will certainly increase. More immediately, the economic condition of the blacks will improve.

One little example will give some evidence of this, as well as of the effects of a combination of apartheid with bureaucratic madness. The shortage of houses for Africans in the whole country is counted in six figures. Like every other area, the East Rand (the urban complex east of Johannesburg) faces this shortage. Local authorities there decided to take action. Building firms were willing and ready to build the houses. The materials were available, and the supply of black building workers was abundant. But the workers had to enter the area where the houses were to be built. The authority controlling "mobility of labor"—i.e. the Pass Laws—would not allow them to come because there were no houses there to accommodate them. If the government were to accede to one of the demands of the businessmen (for mobility) the houses would be built, and another of their demands (housing) would have been met also.

For Christians in other countries, facing questions like investment in South Africa or trade with it, the right course at this point would seem to be to encourage both. Prosperity improves the lot of the blacks and opens the way to further improvement. Conversely, the blacks are the first and worst victims of a depression. If there are

no jobs for them in the "white area" they are "endorsed out"—dumped in one of the "homelands" without work or any means of living, but out of sight. The last people to be unemployed are those who have votes. But this is not the whole story.

Blacks Support Boycotts and Sanctions

Very many blacks, certainly the majority of those who are politically active, argue that the withdrawal of foreign investments, trade boycotts, and even U.N. sanctions, are in their interest in the long run, however tough the going may be in the short run. A leading black trade unionist, Mrs. Lucy Mvubela, went abroad and argued the case for continued investment and trade. Though she has impeccable credentials as a radical leader, her fellows called her "Auntie Tom" when she got home. The reasoning behind this attitude is that things must get worse before they get better, that poverty and despair will create a climate favorable to revolution, and that revolution is the only means by which the present wrongs can be put right.

This argument gives rise to these questions: (i) will poverty and depression indeed lead to revolution, particularly in the fairly near future? (ii) is it true that revolution is the only or the best available way to solve the problem? and, (iii) ought Christians to support the revolutionary cause or to throw their weight on to the side of some alternative?

On the first point, predicting a revolution is a very risky form of prophecy. There are so many factors involved that the prophet, whatever he predicts, can easily be mistaken. Without making a prediction either way, we can consider some of the factors. Revolutions come more often out of rising expectations than out of despair. (The very reforms that have been discussed here are more likely than despair to provoke one.) Professor Calvin Woodward of the University of New Brunswick has pointed out that while the potential leaders of revolution in South Africa are based in the cities, their potential mass following is rural, that is to say in the "homelands." The government's policy of making the homelands independent attaches their peoples to a local leadership opposed to the radical leadership of the cities. Revolutionary leaders and their potential followers are being separated.

Revolution in the sense of a massive armed uprising to overthrow the regime has almost always needed two conditions if it is to succeed: a loss of confidence and nerve by the regime and its supporters, and the help of a significant part of the armed forces. There is no sign of either of these conditions in South Africa. Hostile moves or attitudes by other countries tend to exasperate most white South Africans and make them rally behind their government. The armed forces are overwhelmingly white. Military intervention by other African countries would be futile. Experts calculate that in a military sense South Africa could defeat any enemy except a Great Power. And the hard core of the whites, that is to say the Afrikaners, are very determined. They believe that their domination is God's will. And they could not preserve their national or cultural identity anywhere outside South Africa.

"Revolution" in South Africa, if it occurs in the next few decades, is unlikely to take the form of a mass uprising. It is more likely to be an escalation of what is already happening: riots, boycotts, strikes, sabotage. In the face of such attacks, will the government give way and make concessions? Or will it, on the other hand, be able to suppress this kind of hostility?

The answer to the second question is that it has been, and for a long time probably will be, able to suppress a particular riot by superior force, but it has not been able to prevent this expression of hostility from breaking out again and again in various places. Which brings us back to the first question: will it achieve this by making concessions? And that is linked to our next topic, is revolution the only or the best solution to the problem?

At least on the surface, it appears that the problem will not be solved either by revolution or by any other means. That is to say, the government will not yield either to force or to reasonable persuasion. The reason for this is political in the narrowest sense.

The great political expression of Afrikaner nationalism and nationhood is the National Party, which has been in power since 1948 and has been responsible for the evils described earlier in this article. It has been responsible also for the small and hesitant "reforms" which have been discussed. These, and the slightly liberal or compassionate sounds that some Nationalist leaders were making as recently as a year ago, have alarmed very many of their followers. These, the *verkramptes,* formed the very conservative right wing of the party, opposed to the (relatively) "enlightened" *verligtes* who supported some degree of reform in the system of white supremacy. In 1969 the most extreme *verkramptes* had even broken away from the party on the ground that it had become too liberal, pink if not actually red. They had formed the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Re-founded National Party) or H.N.P.

At first this seemed to present no danger to the government. H.N.P. candidates got very few votes, not because their ideas were unpopular but because they had committed the sin of schism. The need for Afrikanerdom to preserve a united front was, for historical reasons, deeply felt by most Nationalists. At successive elections, however, the H.N.P. steadily increased its

The necessary beginning, without which no change can occur, is to split the National Party. There is not very much that foreigners can do about this, but there is a little.

vote, though not yet winning a seat. In the general election of April, 1981, it still failed to win a seat, but its share of the vote quadrupled, so that it seemed to be poised to make a breakthrough next time. The only way the ruling Nationalists could defeat the H.N.P. was to become as reactionary as possible. In Waterberg (northern Transvaal) the opposing candidates were Jaap Marais, leader of the H.N.P., and Dr. Treurnicht, leader of the National Party in the Transvaal and the most conspicuous *verkrampte* in the whole party. Treurnicht won, but a less reactionary candidate would have lost.

The gains made at the other end of the spectrum by the Progressive Federal Party did not in themselves worry the Nationalists, but they helped to bring the latter's share of the popular vote down to 53 per cent. A few more reforms, and a breakthrough by the H.N.P., might cause a stampede of right wing Nationalists into that party. P. W. Botha and his *verligte* supporters stopped their reformist talk at once. Police and bulldozers were let loose. The government had lost its room for maneuver.

Divisions Among the Nationalists

All this means that the Prime Minister and those who share what are supposed to be his "enlightened" views value their own power and the unity of the party much more than their enlightenment. A South African historian was right on the mark when he said that "my definition of a *verligte* is one who is prepared to split the National Party." The present leaders are not prepared to split it. But if it were to be split nevertheless, by factors beyond the control of the *verligtes,* these would cease to have any reason to adapt their policies to *verkrampte* prejudices. This is not to say that they would make major concessions to African demands; but they might (with the support of what are now the opposition parties on the liberal side) go some way to meet the terms laid down by the businessmen. This would make the political situation more fluid and make further changes more likely.

This is a very uncertain answer to the question whether revolution is the only or the best way to solve the problem. It only suggests that in certain circumstances a more peaceful way *may* be opened up.

Christians in South Africa prefer that way if it is possible. All of the "English-speaking" churches (i.e. all except the Dutch Reformed) are officially opposed to the whole system of apartheid. Many of their members are weak-kneed about this, but it is true to say that the clergy and the devout laity of those churches are firm in their opposition to the whole system. Two of the churches, the Methodist (majority of members black) and the Presbyterian (majority of members white) have just been holding their annual conferences. The members of the Methodist Conference took an oath to bring about "a free and just southern Africa" and denounced apartheid as "the sinful work of the devil." They unanimously supported a resolution which included these words:

> God seeks a free South Africa, delivered from the violence of oppression, revolution, and war. We now declare to all South Africans that there is a better way, where people who have discovered their love for each other translate it into justice for all.

The Methodists evidently believe that non-violent change is possible.

The new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church told the General Assembly that "if we refuse to give up our drive to dominate others, God will not defend us. . . . He has a way forward for South Africa in which domination of one group by another ceases, because justice towards each other has taken its place—justice rooted deep and strong in God's law."

The General Assembly urged the clergy to disregard government banning orders when preaching and when circulating written material within the church—i.e., to break the law by quoting the words of banned persons. The clergy were also advised to disregard the Mixed Marriages Act and to marry people of different races, after warning them of the punishment the State could inflict on them. (Clergy doing this would of course be liable to penalties too).

The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches also have good records in the fight against apartheid. In general, the policy has been to seek and demand peaceful change rather than revolution. And it must not be forgotten that a courageous minority in the Dutch Reformed churches has been speaking in the same vein. It is reasonable to suggest that Christians in the rest of the world support that kind of struggle.

The necessary beginning, without which no change can occur, is to split the National Party. There is not very much that foreigners can do about this, but there is a little. That party is now in the posture hallowed by Afrikaner tradition, standing shoulder to shoulder inside the *laager* (circle of wagons) ready to fight to the last round against the enemy raging outside. The object of those who want peaceful change should be to persuade the defenders to break up the *laager* and come out to have a relaxed look at the world outside. They will do this only if they feel that it is safe, and that something can be gained, by doing so.

The Nationalist *verligtes* know perfectly well that—in the Prime Minister's own words—the consequences of failing to reform will be "too ghastly to contemplate." At present they find the prospect of losing control of a

Again and again, the government's supporters, and even some of its opponents, repeat the complaint that world opinion gives South Africa no credit for any reform that it manages to achieve.

united Afrikanerdom even more ghastly. One of the reasons for this—and it affects a large body of white opinion—is that they see no advantage in giving up anything that they have because there is nothing they are likely to gain in return. Most specifically, what they seem unlikely to gain is the approval of world opinion. Again and again the government's supporters, and even some of its opponents, repeat the complaint that the world gives them no credit for any reform that they achieve. However much they concede, the world belittles it and emphasizes only what has not been done. "Nothing will satisfy them but our giving up everything" has been the refrain.

Even if one thinks that the concessions made have been only "cosmetic," and that little credit has been earned yet, an insistence on all or nothing is bad political tactics. As every teacher knows, or ought to know, an occasional pat on the back is necessary for the training of even the weakest student. But in this case there is a special factor which is even more important, a kind of encouragement that will do more than anything else to dissipate the herd instinct of the beleaguered Nationalists. It concerns not South Africa itself, but other countries.

A standard defense of South Africa is to compare its record with those of many other countries. Whether the abuse in question is imprisonment without trial, solitary confinement, torture and police brutality generally, restriction of the freedom of the press, denial of freedom of movement, illiteracy and lack of educational opportunity, denial of political rights, violent suppression of public protests, a standard of living at or below the starvation level, or almost any other of the evils for which the South African government is responsible, it can point to dozens of other countries with far worse records.

The UN and Comparative Racism

In the early 1960s Ethiopia and Liberia (these states taking the initiative because they had been members of the former League of Nations) sought from the International Court a declaration, the effect of which would have been to force South Africa to place its mandate for South-West Africa (Namibia) under the trusteeship system of the United Nations. As it was discovered that the original charge by the applicants would not stand up to legal scrutiny, they shifted their ground. The final charge against South Africa was that its policy in the mandated (as in its own) territory was to "allot status, rights, duties, privileges, or burdens on the basis of membership of a group, class, or race rather than on the basis of individual merit, capacity, or potential." This was a very fair description, but the South African rejoinder was to show that the same policy prevailed in at least 50 states and territories of the world, including both the applicant states and 38 other members of the United Nations.

Many of those countries were, and still are, guilty not only of the abuses listed above, but specifically of discrimination against people because of their membership of a group, in some cases of a *racial* group.

This kind of comparison is being made every day in South Africa. There is a world outcry because a dozen people have been killed in that country, but the massacre of thousands or tens of thousands in another country is hardly noticed by the press.

There are two reasons why the world behaves towards South Africa in this "unfair" way. The first is that the oppression in that country is of black people by white. The oppression of brown by yellow, or of a group of any color by oppressors of the same color, is not seen in the same light. Even discrimination by whites against blacks is not condemned in the same way if it is a mere abuse, not sanctioned by law. In South Africa that kind of discrimination is openly sanctioned and enjoined by the law itself. For that reason some have argued that the South African case is *sui generis*.

That is a risky statement to make. In Northern Ireland a terrorist Catholic force, with bases in an adjacent Catholic country, guns down members of a Protestant majority in a territory which is legally a part of a neighboring, predominantly Protestant country; and Protestant terrorists reciprocate. Is there any other part of the world where this situation is found? No; then the Northern Irish case is also *sui generis*. And one could put a lot of other cases into that class. This is not a good reason for picking on South Africa and leaving everyone else alone.

The real reason for the passion generated by the South African case is that for the last few centuries, of all the suffering minorities or majorities in the world, members of the black race have undoubtedly been the most hurt. The real measure of this is less the suffering of the body—slavery, the Middle Passage, poverty, unemployment, brutality, and the rest—than the suffering of the black soul through humiliation. No other racial group has been exposed to anything comparable with the contempt directed at black people by whites, whether in words, deeds, or mere facial expressions. Now that this kind of thing seems to be coming to an end, the flaunting of racial discrimination by South Africa has become a deeply felt insult. Hence the "picking on" South Africa.

No Christian should ever lose sight of this aspect of the question. But if it is allowed to dictate our whole policy, we may sacrifice the end to the means. The end is to get those last-ditchers to come out of the ditch, re-

We should not adopt policies whose primary purpose is simply to make us feel good.

lax, and allow freer rein to their feelings of humanity. "Picking on" South Africa and disregarding the other cases is one of the ways of convincing them that there is nothing to be gained by compromising with prejudiced and rigid opponents.

There is, in my opinion, a second reason for the passionate denunciation of South Africa, while a blind eye is turned in all other directions. Unlike the first reason, it is not a creditable one. In the course of a long life I have seen many causes taken up in this unrestrained fashion. There is, somewhere in the woodwork, a great reserve of human beings whose main psychological need is to make loud protests and demonstrations, to vent their anger on somebody or something. For good or bad reasons they climb on to the bandwagon that happens to be passing by. The fashionable bandwagon today is the anti-South African one.

Of Christian Options and Judgments

These allowances having been made, I would argue that an attack on the evils in South Africa would have a much greater impact on the people we would like to influence if it were qualified by reference to other evil regimes, by generous acknowledgement of even the smallest signs of improvement, by showing understanding of the plight of the white minority (especially the Afrikaners, who have nowhere else to go), and by recognizing that among the whites there are many who in varying degrees oppose the evils that we all oppose.

Each church should keep up contact and dialogue with its sister church in South Africa. This will be difficult for the Reformed Church, since there is a breach, and some mutual hostility between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the other Reformed Churches of the world. But even in that case it must be remembered that there is a brave Dutch Reformed minority which needs contact and encouragement.

As for trade boycotts, sanctions, investments, and the rest, I would argue that on these matters Christians should keep their options open. In the circumstances of this moment, such boycotts and sanctions are probably counter-productive. But South Africa must never for a moment be allowed to forget that the world is waiting for significant changes in its policy, and prolonged foot-dragging might move us all closer to a position of open hostility.

These attitudes *may* help a little to break up the log-jam. The essential point to remember is that we must not lose sight of the desirable ends; means which will not achieve those ends are not to be adopted merely because they make us feel good.

Ashes 1933

I've left Berlin.
But nightwet still
licks against my past.
I cannot read the morsecode
of the nightmoth's wing.
I cannot find
the cloistered hours
lined up each to each.
My arms, close to my sides
seem to polarize
East to West.
My head's weight,
tilted back and up
denies your fate.
I trust the rhythm
of my breath.
I need to think
that you live, but doubt
spills once again
into the inevitability
of evening.

Rudolf Wittenberg

Blackness Castle

Gaunt work-a-day fortress of barrack halls
and stores, chambers for wine and gunpowder,
chill inner rooms where the sergeants' whores
lay drafty in the blast from off the Forth
stout walls cannot keep out.
Bleak history of skirmishings in minor wars,
of treaties, accommodations made and broken,
changing hands, but never by the sword.
No stomach-pinching sieges, eating vermin,
drinking blood. No gallant sallies forth
to break the back of an attacker at a blow.
But the ice-floe howl of the East wind
past the barren islands, the sentries' hourly
grimace into the slobbering mouth of the haar,
the far-near scouring of the tides, performing
their janitory duties, providing the only assault
ever launched against those stark defences
with their idle, aimless cannon-balls.
Blackness, your name hints dark and deadly
deeds that never came to be. Your fate
to know the stony drudgery of soldiering
in a god-abandoned hole, beside the Northern sea,
the cruel years of boredom that it takes
to kill a cause, or crush a sullen people.

J. Barrie Shepherd

"Call No Man Happy Before He Dies"

Reflections on the Work Ethic

Forrest L. Vance

The title of these remarks is a proverb that had some common currency in the Hebrew-speaking community of Maccabean Israel. It is the subject of a short poem composed by one Jesus ben Sirach and is included in the book of his wisdom which we call Ecclesiasticus in most English versions of the Old Testament Apocrypha.

A Hebrew text of most of this book was discovered in Cairo in 1896, and fragments of it are among the Dead Sea scrolls. However, prior to 1896, European language translations were all made from Greek texts. The problems confronting a translator of such a book, even with the original Hebrew available, are of course formidable. Communicating the spirit of a work composed in remote circumstances of language, time, and place requires constructive imagination as well as fidelity to the original words.

This obscure poem is particularly important for our understanding of the meaning of work in the contemporary world, because it was just here that the modern concept of vocation was created, and invested with religious significance, by the deliberate phrasing of the text by a translator with a definite viewpoint about this matter. The passage involved is that recorded in Ecclesiasticus 11:20-28, and the strong-minded translator was Martin Luther.

In the New English Bible, the poem begins, "Stand by your contract and give your mind to it; grow old at your work. Do not envy a rogue his success; trust the Lord and stick to your job." The King James Version of 1611 says, "Be steadfast in thy covenant, and be conversant therein, and waxe olde in thy worke. Marveile not at the workes of sinners, but trust in the Lord, and abide in thy labour."

According to Max Weber (1958, p. 79) our modern concept of work as a "calling" was created by Luther, when he first used the word "Beruf" (calling) in translating this text in Ecclesiasticus, "Bleibe in Gottes Wort und übe dich darin/und beharre in deinem *Beruf* und las dich nicht irren/wie die Gottlosen nach Gut trachten. Vertraue du Gott/und bleibe in deinem *Beruf*." (emphasis added). Weber says, "After that it speedily took on its present meaning in the everyday speech of all Protestant peoples. . . ."

Luther, Weber, and the Work Ethic

It is hard to imagine that this obscure apochryphal scripture passage, the first lines of a poem on a popular Hebrew proverb of the second century, B.C. could have been solely responsible for the sudden transformation of the work-related attitudes and beliefs of the entire body of sixteenth-century European Protestants. And Weber, of course, suffered from no such delusion. In three stupendous footnotes (Weber, 1958, pp. 204-211) he reviews the documentary history of the passage in Ecclesiasticus with comments indicating familiarity with Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Dutch, Swedish, Spanish, and Italian sources, plus indications of familiarity with additional material. He cites literature and informal communications with the most important of his contemporaries in philology and theology, and he traces Luther's use of the word "Beruf" (calling) throughout the entire text of Luther's translation of the Bible.

Weber establishes that Luther was systematically using a revolutionary concept of human occupations in his work as Bible translator. This revolutionary concept was rooted in Luther's relentless, voluminous published attacks on holy orders and monasticism. His novel view of "calling" was also publicly dramatized by his own career transformation, and by his marriage and family life. It is hardly surprising that Luther chose "Lutheran" alternatives in translating the Scriptures, wherever his source documents permitted interpretive options.

The revolutionary aspect of Luther's concept of vocation was the idea that everyone is called, not just those

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There is little question that the forces of pulpit oratory, instruction in schools, and administration of public and private enterprise have found the gospel of work-as-virtue to be satisfying doctrine.

with religious vocations. Thus, all callings are equally valuable in the sight of God, and faithful work in one's calling is a duty to the God of all callings. In Luther's view, the cosmos of human callings is one way God's love is expressed in the world, and work is also one of the battlegrounds where God and Satan contend for human souls. The full development of Luther's idea of vocation is an immense task, but one that has been admirably begun by Gustav Wingren (1957) of Lund University, Sweden. Suffice it to say here that the idea of what it means to work in a vocation was one of the things that was decisively reformed by the Lutheran Reformation.

Weber's "Protestant ethic" argued further that, going beyond the Lutheran views, Calvinists came to believe that faithful vocational performance could provide assurance of salvation, that one was among the elect, an idea that contributed greatly (says Weber) to the rise of capitalism. Research and discussion concerning the political, economic, and religious importance of the "Protestant ethic" constitute a voluminous literature. Weber's idea has been examined from the perspective of religion (e.g., Tawney, 1926), politics (e.g., Walzer, 1976), and economics (e.g., Robertson, 1933); and also studied from the psycho-historical viewpoint (Mitzman, 1969). However, few have quarreled with the idea that the Reformation produced a fundamental change in the meaning of work for the people of Protestant countries, a meaning eventually embedded in most western ideologies.

The idea that work is a religious-moral, that is, fundamental obligation is one solution to a pervasive human problem, namely the universal experience of divergence between desires and obligations (cf. Pelz & Pelz, 1964). Few people have ever been blessed with a continuing congruence between the things they do to earn a living and the things they do (or would do if they could) for pleasure, or to give meaning to their lives.

Work as Something to be Endured

The pre-Reformation solution to this problem, in Christian Europe, was to regard all occupations as equally unimportant and tainted by the flesh, with the exception of religious callings. Work, as all other earthly experience, was to be endured as a part of one's preparation for heaven. In this view, efforts to achieve wealth and success could most easily be understood as succumbing to temptations of the devil.

There is little question that the forces of pulpit oratory, instruction in schools, and administration of public and private enterprise have found the gospel of work-as-virtue to be satisfying doctrine. There have always been skeptics, particularly with respect to some of the consequences of industrialization (cf. Ward, 1962; Marx, 1964). It is also clear that the idea that one's job is a divine calling has not been easy to sell to those workers whose opportunities have been limited to callings that combine low wages, long hours, and dangerous hard physical labor. Collective bargaining has been a more attractive repository of faith for such workers than the consciences of the owners and managers of the enterprises in which they work.

Still, until quite recently, there has been very little criticism of the core idea that hard work at any legitimate job is a virtue. The refusal of many workers to give unswerving loyalty to their jobs and employers has produced a whole secondary industry of personnel management. As Loren Baritz (1960) has made abundantly clear, the social scientists, especially industrial psychologists, who work in this field are "the servants of power."

In an analysis of the origins and current status of the ideology of work (Anthony, 1977, p. 5), the following summary is given of the way in which personnel management is directed towards the problem of maintaining commitment to the work ethic.

> Dull and repetitive tasks are most frequently the target of the personnel technician intent on job enlargement and job enrichment. What is the purpose of this attention? Is it to promote the social and psychological health of workers, or is it to make changes in work which will at last make it conceivable to extend an ideology of work to those most recalcitrant, or alienated—workers who have been so far exempted from its appeal by the patent absurdity of its application to their own jobs. A great deal of the ideology of work is directed at getting men to take work seriously when they know that it is a joke.

For contemporary Americans and Europeans, the religious (and religiously-derived ethical) ideology of work would seem to be a diminishing source of meaning for the jobs they do. In their situation, other values must be found to replace those that are disappearing, or work will become a less significant activity for people, apart from the sheer production of income.

The second alternative, work becoming unimportant, is a real possibility, particularly in what Daniel Bell (1973) has called post-industrial societies (those in which only a small minority of the work force is needed to provide all of the material needs of the community). In such a situation, most people would be employed, if at all, to provide services, or else transfer payments or equity dividends and rents would permit people to follow their own interests.

There have always been some people who have been supported by income from owned assets. There have always been some people who have been supported financially in roles that have not been construed as employ-

ment: the young, the old, the indigent, and spouses who keep houses. These roles *can* be construed as employment, and there are in fact ways that one can quit or be fired as a spouse, child, parent, or indigent. Services and hiring practices also exist for these roles.

Perhaps it is even more instructive to note that many cultures have not considered work to be virtue, but an evil activity not suitable for citizens. Classical Greece was such a society, and Plato's ideal republic, as a matter of course, depended upon slaves to carry out the material tasks necessary for its existence. Ancient Rome, Babylonia, Egypt, and many more recent societies have considered some or almost all work unfit for citizens. Neither the plantations of the United States nor the pyramids of Egypt were built by student volunteers.

Moving from Work to Citizenship

Mechanization, rather than slavery, is the potential resource that could permit a modern society to develop a system in which citizenship is a full-time occupation, or nearly full-time occupation, for the largest part of the population. Some small countries with a commitment to social democracy, and a high level of technical development, may be moving in this direction.

Sweden is a particularly interesting example of such a trend. Following his earlier book on Sweden (Childs, 1936), Marquis Childs has written a follow-up study (Childs, 1980) which suggests that this small nation is continuing to distribute income without great variations related to traditional correlates of pay such as seniority or skill. The recent Swedish political swing to the right, according to Childs, was largely a reaction to a plan (the Meidner plan) for appropriating 20 per cent of corporate profits for the sole use of the Swedish labor organization as it saw fit. Even the Swedes found this a bit much. The fact that such a plan could be proposed with a real chance of acceptance is in breathtaking contrast to the political possibilities in most industrialized countries.

In any case, one way work can become less important, without damage to people's lives, is for less of it to be needed and done. For those who must work, or want to, the question of meaning in work would, of course, still remain. So, if work-as-virtue does not continue to be a viable source of meaning, what other possibilities exist? How can a modern worker resolve the split between what he or she is required to do to make a living and the things that make life worthwhile?

To begin with, this is a sensible question only for people who do in fact believe that there are possible circumstances in which their lives could be meaningful. For such people, alienation from one's work might be reduced by changes in the work itself (job enrichment in the current jargon) and by finding connections between work and matters of "ultimate concern" in Paul Tillich's phrase (cf. Tillich, 1951, pp. 11-15). But if a person becomes alienated from the human community, from life itself, no alternative sources of value exist to be integrated into one's work; one has no ultimate concerns.

Even psychologists understand that a meaningful existence, in the sense of commitment rather than alienation, can only be erected on a foundation of basic trust (cf. Erikson, 1950, pp. 247-248). Perhaps it is best not to press too closely just yet for a complete answer to the question of what is the ultimate object of our basic trust, but Erik Erikson (1968, pp. 105-107) says plainly that the institutional expression of basic trust is religion. The evaluation we make of our lives as meaningful or meaningless depends, in large part, on whether, in the midst of our finite and imperfect existence, we adopt a posture of trust or mistrust in what has brought us into that existence, what Tillich describes as "that which determines our being or nonbeing." (Tillich, 1951, loc. cit.)

Tillich is particularly helpful because he is able to cut away all distracting metaphysical considerations and show that vital theological-religious issues continue to confront us whether we choose to respond to them in some traditional mode or not. His is a theology fitting for what is commonly regarded as a post-supernatural, or at least a post-dogmatic age. Rooted in historical Christianity, Tillich's work is a possible bridge between Christian faith and the truly ecumenical human enterprise of coping with existential anxiety.

H. Richard Niebuhr (1963, p. 119) described the situation from a similar point of view in this way:

> Our primordial interpretation of this radical action by which we are is made in faith as trust or distrust. Between these two there seems to be no middle term. The inscrutable power by which we are is either for us or against us. If it is neutral, heedless of the affirmations or denials of the creatures by each other, it is against us, to be distrusted as profoundly as if it were actively inimical. For then it has cast us into being as aliens, as beings that do not fit.

Niebuhr's book, *The Responsible Self,* is concerned with what is a fitting and appropriate, "responsible," life. He argues that responsible living entails an explicit or implicit decision to trust the process that has brought us into being, and without such trust it is impossible to undertake any occupational or social activity with a conviction that one's behavior is truly fitting, suitable, "responsible." The quotation marks around "responsible" indicate Niebuhr's special conception of the term as a kind of dialectical attitude in which one's humanism is indicated by the disposition to answer for one's thought and actions *and* to press for further questions.

The theological assimilation of contemporary psychological notions is reflected in the way that the idea of "work as virtuous obedience to God" is reinterpreted by

Some degree of disillusionment concerning the moral value of our work is probably inevitable for all of us, and we then must try to find realistic ways to reinterpret our occupational experience.

Tillich and Niebuhr to mean something like "work as responsible commitment in basic trust." The beauty of this change is that it can be done with total intellectual honesty, managing to maintain the integrity of the theological perspective, without going beyond the empirically-determinable facts of human existence for premises. However, such a reformulation certainly lacks much of the moral and rhetorical force of the original version of the Protestant ethic. Something less desiccated is going to be wanted by most working people if the ideology of work is to be restored as a vital impulse to faithful job performance.

The crumbling of the Protestant ethic as a foundation for the meaning of work, if that is what is happening (and I believe it is), marks a major turning point in our culture. Like the fall of Rome, this is not a brief or simple affair. As a major stabilizing force disintegrates, various constituencies arise to prop up the tottering structure, or to hasten the collapse, or to establish alternatives. If some new stability is to be achieved, its form is not clearly discernible in the scattered shadows it casts before it as it comes. And it is not likely to arrive next week.

Finding New Sources to Justify Work

Those of us who are able to hold on to the ideology of work-as-virtue will be annoyed and vaguely troubled by those of us who find that view no longer credible. Also, those of us who can carry on our occupational lives under the influence of some new alternative vision may be able to keep a reasonably steady grip on our work-based self-esteem. But those of us who start our working lives with a belief that work is a moral good and then come to find that idea incredible in the very process of erecting a lifestyle upon it are vulnerable to the full shock of losing the major source of our self-approval.

Some degree of disillusionment concerning the moral value of our work is probably inevitable for all of us, and we then must try to find realistic ways to reinterpret our occupational experience. If commitments to work can no longer be justified by connections to one's assurance of salvation or by contributing to one's moral self-approval, perhaps other important values can be shown to be relevant.

In America, since the end of World War II, there has been a considerable literature on self-fulfillment or self-actualization as a value, and one to which occupational achievement might reasonably be expected to make a major contribution. Americans have at times seemed to have had a nearly mystical belief in "the right job" as the key to life satisfaction. Among psychologists, Donald Super (1951) captured the sense of this popular notion in a theory and research program that defined vocational adjustment as implementing one's self-concept in a developmental sequence of occupations. Growth to full potential—self-realization—is the key to satisfaction.

To be sure, many people are not able to enter occupations that do much for their self-concepts. Still, like the vision of the Holy Grail, the dream of self-actualizing employment is a spur to the heroic ambition of many a person for whom work as ethical requirement has no meaning.

Empirically, it has been apparent for some time that the relationships among occupational performance, occupational satisfaction, and life satisfaction are modest. An extensive review of the job satisfaction literature (Locke, 1976) discovered that over 3,300 studies of job satisfaction had been published. The Locke review mentions only Kornhauser's (1965) classic study of mental health in industry and two journal articles as indicating significant correlations between attitudes towards the job and attitudes towards life. Of course the direction of causal influences is uncertain in these relationships, as the authors recognize. It seems probable that job attitudes are as much determined by more general life attitudes as the reverse. And one respectable study (London, et al., 1977) has reported that positive effects of job and avocational activities on life satisfaction are limited to white, middle-class, male workers.

The idea of work as a ready route to self-actualization may well be a light that fails rather quickly. It is true that there have been rapid changes in American laws and customs tending to reduce discrimination based on sex, race, and age. These changes have certainly created realistically-larger career hopes and expectations for many of us. The past two decades have brought about a revolution of norms, and it may be fair to say a revolution of consciousness as well, with respect to occupational opportunity. Young women and minority workers do indeed have increased access to occupations heretofore dominated by white males, usually older. However, the young person (of whatever sex or race) bent on self-fulfillment through a career quickly learns that many jobs require almost total involvement if one is to succeed, so self-fulfillment is possible only if the job requirements completely define the fulfillment being sought. The most salient characteristic of the older white males who dominate the upper levels of management and the high-pay professions may well be their unregenerate devotion to the work ethic.

There are very few people (and probably a declining number) for whom work alone is a completely satisfying answer to the question, "Who am I?" For this reason alone, it would seem sensible to consider activities performed for income as conceptually separate from activities performed to give meaning to one's life. Therefore, in the rest of this paper, social roles that produce income

Our occupations will continue to provide the necessities of life and some meaning, while avocational activities will be directed towards the more complete fulfillment of vocation.

will be called occupations, and social roles that give meaning to life will be called vocations. With this vocabulary I would now like to discuss some of the implications of variation in the extent of overlap between occupation and vocation.

Much of the earlier discussion is simplified by separating the concepts of vocation and occupation in this way. Vocation, then, is what is impossible without basic trust, while work as self-actualization is then a faith that nearly complete overlap between vocation and occupation is possible and desirable; and the Protestant ethic is a statement that, for the person of faith, occupation, whatever it may be, is vocation.

Separating Occupation from Vocation

This separation of terms is not an entirely new view, even among psychologists. C. G. Wrenn (1964) used much the same distinction in a fine article on work and values. The distinction is also implicit in the entire literature on job satisfaction and work motivation. It simply hasn't been crisply defined and given emphasis as a central idea in understanding individual, group, and cultural variations in work beliefs and attitudes.

The Protestant ethic and the self-actualization motive each provide a way to increase both a personal and a cultural sense of occupational-vocational congruence. However, doubts based on theory and/or experience suggest that almost all of us experience significant ideological and personal discomfort based on evident divergences between occupational necessities and vocational longings. Some kind of tolerable balance or compromise will probably be achieved by most of us as individuals. Our occupations will provide the necessities of life and *some* meaning, while avocational activities will be directed towards the more complete fulfillment of vocation. We will be "work-adjusted" rather than satisfied or fulfilled by our jobs, and we will try to keep our jobs from getting in the way of those activities that give our lives a true sense of response to a calling.

The value implicit in this idea of a "balance" of activities is mental health or personal adjustment. It probably represents the dominant emerging attitude of post-industrial, post-ideological, post-dogmatic western societies. While such a view (personal health as a dominant value) has considerable appeal both for individual planning and for policy development, it is neither perfectly clear what is meant by this idea, nor can we predict the social and cultural consequences if such a value were to become dominant. There is certainly reason for discomfort about the style of future personal and community life in our society if what is developing is a form of narcissism, as Christopher Lasch (1978) has argued. Furthermore, there is room for doubt about the possibilities of healthy balance for most working people. Many occupations are not merely non-vocational (meaningless), but counter-vocational (absurd), and there are work-related structural characteristics of society that hinder the pursuit of meaning for most people.

The specialized division of labor in our successful industrialized democracy, with associated geographic and social mobility, plus our cultural diversity, have produced in America a remarkable specialization of personal relationships as well. We work with one set of people, worship with another set, have still others as neighbors, may share our recreational life with others, and frequently have our relatives scattered throughout the entire country, except for those in our immediate household (who more and more frequently are temporary companions). Put another way, our society is one in which we have very few relationships that involve us with each other in more than one or two dimensions of our existence. Many of us have a few close friends with whom we have shared a great deal, but these friends are commonly not currently even in the same community. Many of us maintain what multidimensional intimacy we have by mail, long-distance telephone calls, and sporadic visits.

The energy we invest in maintaining our intimate friendships is evidence of their importance in our efforts to find meaning in our lives. Vocational efforts are often kept alive by the support of friends, and friendship is certainly vital for mental health, but we are organized as a society to make it difficult to become deeply interested in one another at all, and difficult also to keep in touch with each other once we have formed bonds of significant mutual attachment.

This is perhaps not a universal experience, but for many Americans it is a reasonably realistic description of the facts of everyday life. People living in countries that are smaller, more culturally homogeneous, and perhaps less socially-mobile may find it easier to move towards an ideal of "healthy balance" as a workable ideology of work. Even given these changes, a tradition of mutual concern and self-disclosure would also be needed if the result is not to be a safe, comfortable, but utterly boring society.

These last sorts of issues can be studied most profitably by cross-cultural investigations. We need to spend more time getting an understanding of how attitudes towards work are changing in countries that don't have the same structural problems of society as the United States. Japan, the Scandinavian Countries, Britain, France, and Germany—all have fewer of the problems of geographic size and cultural diversity that contribute to the problem of work attitudes in this country. The variety of customs regarding family, friendship, and intimacy is of course very great, and the influence of

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these patterns on work attitudes is profound. But that is a topic for another time.

What can be said here is that cultural change, like the growth, aging, and changing behavior of individuals, is not subject to objective analysis by those directly involved. As our title suggests, a final evaluation cannot be made during life. It is a post-mortem affair. Perhaps only dead cultures can be truly appreciated, even though the one we live in is the one we most need to understand, if only partially and provisionally.

It is my impression that cultural change in our society is more often experienced as loss than gain, at least in the midst of the action. The losses are obvious, the gains less certain. Perhaps this accounts for the mournful tone of much literary and historical reflection on changing times. Matthew Arnold listening to the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the "sea of faith," and Wordsworth's crying out that he would "rather be a pagan, suckled in a creed outworn" than be caught up in the life of a man of affairs both express this mood. Spengler's *Decline of the West* is a wonderful example of a version of this idea that seemingly cannot be killed by refutation.

The Attractions of Innocence

Our literary tradition also fosters a romantic view of childhood, and a distrust of maturity. The loss of innocence is often described in tragic terms. Wordsworth is again a fine example of this tendency. In his ode entitled "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," he says:

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy;
> Shades of the prison house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows
> He sees it in his joy;
> The youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

Disillusionment, to be sure, is a fundamental process of our personal and cultural development. But the loss of Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, the obstetric stork, and even the Protestant ethic may also be construed as progress, as education. Disillusionment may not be often depicted as a positive process by poets, but there is certainly a case to be made for the positive value of the painful changes that can only come by giving up what is no longer credible.

So, if our modern attitudes towards our work are more skeptical, tentative, noncommittal, suspicious, and dissatisfied than those in the past, perhaps it is because we have fewer illusions; and because we are very much alive, and not ready to die in order to be called happy. It remains to be seen whether a new economic-ethical synthesis can be achieved which will allow us to be alive, without illusions, and happy all at the same time.

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Voluntarism Revisited

The Personal, Humane Response Still Matters

Lois Reiner

Eight years ago I wrote an article for *The Cresset* ("Voluntarism: Salve or Solution?," January, 1974) attacking voluntarism. I've changed my mind.

The banner reading CHANGE still tilts from my hall closet. Reminders of our local community's efforts in the area of low-cost housing for minority families are still alive and expanding. Currently, however, I'm convinced that it's the little acts of social kindness that most need encouraging. Once I pooh-poohed traditional approaches to delivering human services as always salve, seldom solution. Now I'm discovering that salve might possibly provide our last connection with the humane response to human suffering in a society whose responses, when they occur at all, tend to the technological.

Take, for instance, *The Global 2000 Report to the President.* Its scary predictions regarding world conditions focus on overpopulation and shrinking food supplies, deadly pollution, and a widening gap between those who feast and those who starve as a "threat to the future welfare of humankind." Undoubtedly the fact-finders are correct in mandating the creation of "a mechanism for continuous review" and "prompt and vigorous changes in public policy around the world."

Nevertheless, they skipped a beat. Equally vital to stemming catastrophic trends is a commitment to the humane response, individually and corporately. Technical solutions to largely technologically-created problems only scratch the surface. It's what we might call problems of the heart that require scrutiny. Revised public policy might clear our air and bolster agricultural output, but it can't do much about alleviating certain kinds of pain, loneliness, and humiliation.

Voluntarism, I contend, can.

Eight years ago, I blush to admit, I surveyed the work of voluntary activity and diminished it by suggesting that tender ministerings were not enough. Perhaps I was only responding to particular circumstances: it was primarily women who constituted the armies dedicated to unsalaried succoring. Women, not men, flooded the wards, emergency rooms, cells, and seedy halls with their healing energies. So women, I thought, were perpetuating the myth that they could forever be counted upon only to bandage up the little wounds. All that energy, all that expenditure of creative compassion could be applied to enacting CHANGE, I trumpeted. Allow me to eat those words. I wrote them when husbands were still promising their friends that "No wife of mine will ever WORK!"

That was another milieu. Today's is shot through with new imperatives. Inflation, for one, is dictating a revised version of free time usage, and women have begun toppling from their adorable pedestals to join men in the work place. Today we're ripe for competing equally, freed from the old indoctrination, able to know our full potential. Hurrah! and Boo! I say in the same breath. Hurrah! if we recognize the price to be paid. Boo! if we don't. If both men *and* women are, more and more, commuting to the work place (even second work places), who's left to take on the wards, cells, emergency rooms, and seedy halls anymore? Who has the time? The energy?

Well, we sigh, thank heavens for the professionals and their parent agencies. The emotionally-, physically-, and otherwise-handicapped can still count on them at least. True. On the other hand, what will happen to us when we have fewer and fewer opportunities to soothe, to sacrifice, to act out what our hearts plead is necessary for sustaining humaneness? Now that we have shattered the old stereotypes which had been too long unchallenged, women as well as men are throwing their main energies into performing for pay. Now we can all take on equally the tensions of our technically-perfectible times.

Could we, however, pause for just a moment in our self-congratulations? Just long enough to listen for the possible sound of aortae clogging?

With free time becoming almost non-existent, we invest what little we have, it seems, in self-help activities. A whole new brand of voluntarism, in fact, is catching on across the land, according to a recent survey conducted by Bruce Stokes in the *Christian Science Monitor.* "The new volunteers: not what Mr. Reagan had in mind" are comprised of millions of Americans who now use free time to perform do-it-yourself home renova-

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tions, plant-weed-harvest family gardens, and manifest dietary and exercise changes in their daily lives. President Reagan would like to see these efforts expanded to benefit the entire community. We should only like to see them labelled as necessary as we get back to what is needful.

What is needful requires a bit of a struggle to define. I'd like to suggest it has to do with commodities not marketable, but negotiable nevertheless. The struggle comes, actually, in keeping our "commodities" of creativity, spontaneity, and compassion from getting lost sight of in the fight against inflation, in the battle to become expert, in the myriad pressures of our public lives. There is, of course, the chance that someone reading this enjoys the good fortune of operating from an arena that specializes in hiring the creative, spontaneous, and compassionate. There are always the exceptions. For the rest of us, finding opportunities for keeping those qualities alive is after-5:00 p.m. stuff—if we have the energy, if we realize the need.

Let's say we do. Or that the option comes our way. How would we respond—and with what? And in what sense are our response-commodities "negotiable"?

Last summer I had the option and responded. There were the old commodities, just when I thought they'd rusted over for the season. And compassion, I found, still has negotiable value when exchanged, however imperfectly, for pain, loneliness, and humiliation. She was the prisoner; I was the volunteer. By the time I'd made my third visit to Porter County Jail's women's cell block, a passage from Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* made such sense about "needful." Referring to the Vassar coeds who volunteered to visit inmates of Wiltwyck School for Boys, Brown wrote, "They were some of the nicest girls I had ever met, and some of them knew some things too. You could talk to them and they could understand things."

The point is, there are some "things" we know that are no longer necessary, but are still desperately needful. Those "things" don't fit the efficient and orderly world in which we ply expertise. Indeed, they would only get in the way between 8:00 and 5:00, and would probably ruin our chances for promotion should we attempt to activate them on the job. But they're there, tugging and unclogging. Obviously it's simplistic to say you-too-can-be-nice. Who wants to be merely nice when the going market is for the cool-headed and the credentialed? Still, rewards can surface in the transaction.

St. Paul says it more exactly:

> Of course, I don't mean that others should be relieved to the extent that leaves you in distress. It is a matter of share and share alike. At present your plenty should supply their need, and then at some future date their plenty may supply your need.

He was not talking about charity, which is one-way, nonreciprocal. When we are involved in supply-and-demand of this variety, we are responding humanely; we are affirming humaneness on both sides of the venture. How can we understand our humane capacities unless someone, and rather consistently, provides us with the opportunity to put them into motion? And vice versa.

What it boils down to—this idea of keeping the humane response from atrophying—is convincing ourselves that we also know some things that are vital to "the future of humankind." Perhaps our necessary preoccupation with the economy and environment muffles the conviction, but the head *and* the heart are at stake.

Those maligned volunteers in my long-ago piece understood that; and to them I say thanks. Better late than never. Hurrah for the chance to haul out the enlivening commodities after another pressurized day on the ladder. They may be applied as salve, but in the process we remember certain things that open certain doors where someone waits who might eventually write, ". . . and he or she could understand things."

Cardoness Castle

And that's the murder hole, he said,
above the yett. The boiling lead
would fall like rain.
And those who were not dead
would end up in the pit.
This is it.
Black, jagged drain
for broken bones
and half-cooked brain
within the rubble wall. The moans
would float like music sweet
to the lord and his lady
at their meat.
The greasy scullions
on their climb
from kitchen to the banquet hall
would take a little time
to rest their load
against the wall
right here.
He touched a tiny hole
that led through rock into the pit
and grinned, not air
at all, you see,
but streaming wafts of food would pass
like shafts from Hell
to broken souls,
starving within the well.
And this is it.
The enemy, said he,
is always with us.

J. Barrie Shepherd

Three Mile Island as the War of the Worlds

News and the Popular Representation Of Crisis

James Combs

"What lessons have been learned from the accident at Three Mile Island?" asks a Congressional report on the event. "The most fundamental lesson of TMI," they conclude in a masterpiece of understatement, ". . . is that accidents can happen." Such a conclusion is undoubtedly cold comfort to the approximately 650,000 people who live in the general area of that unfortunate plant, some of whom experienced severe reactions, both immediately and in the long run, because of the fears which proximity to the plant generated.

But, we also learn from the report, those fears were largely unfounded, a "public misconception" that was the fault of the mass media. The "confusion and mental stress" that local residents suffered can be traced to the exaggeration by the media of the risks involved in the incident. The report cites Mrs. Trunk, the Kemeny Commission member who was a local resident: "Too much emphasis was placed (in the media) on the 'what if' rather than the 'what is.' As a result the public was pulled into a state of terror, of psychological stress. More so than any other normal source of news, the evening national news reports by the major networks proved to be the most depressing, the most terrifying."[1] Even though the Kemeny Commission thought the media generally "balanced" in their reporting of the accident, it did score them for examples of "irresponsible reporting," "sensational" visual images, and lack of technical expertise, which "resulted in the public being poorly served."[2]

The author has argued elsewhere that national television, depending on which network one talks about, did not always report the accident as charged.[3] The networks' coverage of TMI was at least in part a function of their respective organizational traditions, current managerial decisions, reportorial styles, and perceived audiences. In its coverage, CBS tended toward the informational style, with the melodrama of TMI defined as reponsible elites versus a nasty but manageable problem, in the manner of "disaster averted" stories (e.g., forest fires, dams threatening to break). NBC was more feature-and-education oriented, telling the story as if it were a panoramic Big Event in which we all learn how a nuclear plant works and how we should think on the question of nuclear power. For ABC the accident was the Frankenstein monster story, with the new Frankenstein fooling around with Mother Nature in his Castle on the Susquehanna, creating a monster which then gets loose and terrorizes the peasants in the surrounding villages.[4]

A Story Whose Time Had Arrived

Yet whatever the variations in style, all the media—networks, newspapers, newsmagazines—were drawn to the TMI story and covered it heavily. Why? For one thing, it was a story whose time had arrived. *The China Syndrome* had just been released. The anti-nuclear movement was getting publicity, and some prominent politicians had expressed doubt about the safety of nuclear plants. Too, the accident occurred in a heavily populated area, close to media centers and easy for the press to get to.[5]

But most of all, TMI was a "good story"—a highly-technological event involving a variety of dramatic options. Even the most "responsible" and restrained news organizations gave dramatic urgency to the story. Walter Cronkite led into the story on Friday, March 30, 1979, with the claim that "the world has never known a day quite like today," and the magisterial *New York Times* headlined: "U.S. Aides See a Risk of Meltdown at Pennsylvania Nuclear Plant: More Radioactive Gas is Released." The story had features of what has been called the "melodramatic imperative": plot twists; intensified peril; the intervention of outside forces; heroes, villains, and fools; a story narrative that includes climax, peripety, and denouement.[6] It offered the press melodramatic options: adventure, mystery, romance,

[1] "Nuclear Powerplant Safety after Three Mile Island," prepared for the Committee on Science and Technology of the House of Representatives (March, 1980), pp. 7, 24-25.

[2] Summary of the Report of the President's Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island (October, 1979), p. 21.

[3] James Combs and Dan Nimmo, "The Return of Frankenstein: The Popular Media Aesthetic of Three Mile Island Coverage by ABC Evening News," *Studies in Popular Culture*, IV (Spring, 1981), 38-48.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] See the wide-ranging article by Peter M. Sandman and Mary Paden, "At Three Mile Island," *Columbia Journalism Review* (July/August, 1979), pp. 43-58.

[6] Paul H. Weaver, "Captives of Melodrama," *New York Times Magazine*, August 29, 1979, pp. 6, 48-51.

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Three Mile Island was an important story for many reasons, including the fact that it was a popular representation of a mass fantasy that has long existed in advanced industrial society.

nightmare. They could "play" the story in a variety of ways for a variety of audiences, but with the assurance that their mass audience would see the drama in the story.

Our argument here, then, is that TMI was an important story for many reasons, but certainly including the fact that it was a latter-day popular representation of a mass fantasy that has been with advanced industrial societies for a long time: the fear that some powerful force, armed with technological power, will intrude upon and even destroy our lives. Either intentionally or by accident, goes the fantasy, something will be loosed which will disrupt the fabric of ordinary life.

We are already aware of the use of technology for war, death camps, and behavior modification. We have, in addition, daily reminders of the intrusion and ill effects of the automobile, pop music, TV, drugs, etc. It is not surprising, accordingly, that one of the recurrent themes in popular culture involves technological threats. The mass uneasiness about the impact of technology contributes to the enduring popularity of the Frankenstein fable, science-fiction, tales of mad scientists (e.g., cloning Hitler in South America), technically-proficient conspiracies (SPECTRE), and so forth. Since technology has been used for evil, popular culture becomes a play-world in which we can experience that evil. We can "identify" the tale because it is part of our consciousness of modern life.

So too can the news media. A technological fable is a good story because it represents an identifiable anxiety in modern consciousness. A story such as Three Mile Island becomes a mythic representation of a more diffuse and latent mass fantasy about the danger of rampant technological development. TMI is part of a "tradition of fright" which popularizes in various forms our standing fear that a nightmare will come in technological armor. The news media, however they played the incident, managed to sense and include this element of the story. Thus, however diverse the coverage, they were all covering it with that tradition in their—and our—background.

The Frankenstein fable is one of the root myths in this tradition. Technology is utilized to create something powerful that is then loosed on an unwary population, which must flee before its onslaught. Unless we have a technology equal to the threat, or something unforeseen happens, the threat remains. The Frankenstein monster cannot be killed and, as movie buffs know, is endlessly revived for yet more destruction.

This formula has had many variations, but the basic features remain constant. Think, for example, of the *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast in 1938. The first part of Orson Welles' famous "panic broadcast" used a fictional tale in a news format, with "reporters" interviewing people and telling of flying saucers and Martians. But the story still belongs in the technological fable tradition. The Martians are an anonymous inhuman force, an army of Frankenstein monsters, armed with a technology they use to take over the earth. People panicked and fled before their onslaught, both in the show and among some few of the listeners to the broadcast.[7]

Similar technological fantasy is also evident in such genres as 1950s science fiction movies and Japanese monster films. Sometimes in such films the technological power is deliberately unleashed, designed to invade and dehumanize ordinary American life, just as (according to the Cold War mind of the fifties) the Communists want to do. The sci-fi movie simply "displaces" the political aspect of the fantasy to outer space.[8] At other times, like the Frankenstein monster, the force unleashed is simply a technological creation that gets out of control. The fifties films, for example, presented us with rabbits, ants, and other creatures suddenly made gigantic and aggressive by the mysterious force of nuclear radiation. The Japanese films also often involved the transforming power of nuclear energy, although at least one included as well a monster created by smog.

Nuclear Energy and Mass Anxiety

Indeed, by the fifties the proliferation of nuclear weapons had become a central part of mass anxiety, since nuclear energy, the new technological power, made us think about the unthinkable. In the 1970s, the rapid expansion of nuclear power plants added another component to our technological fear: were we, in effect, building nuclear bombs in our own cornfields and suburbs? For many, the nuclear power plant and industry became a symbol of the evils of our time, a popular representation of all that was not "natural," of bigness and authority grown out of control, of capitalism playing technological roulette for profit. These fears were bolstered by press reports that in the 1950s an explosion had occurred in a nuclear waste facility in the Soviet Union, causing widespread contamination and loss of life. Finally, *The China Syndrome* reinforced fears that nuclear technology might not be controllable (although, of course, in the movie it *is* controlled).

The news media were aware of, and probably shared, this mass anxiety about nuclear technology, but they also recognized its symbolic power as a force representing that popular fantasy. In terms of media logic, nuclear energy could be seen above all as a story involving the dangers of technology to ordinary people.

Media logic dictates that such a story must be con-

[7] See Hadley Cantril, *The Invasion from Mars* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1940).

[8] William Blake Tyrell, "Star Trek as Myth and TV as Mythmaker," *Journal of Popular Culture*, X, no. 4 (1977), 711-719.

The media logic at work at Three Mile Island means that whatever the "reality" of an event, the definition of the event by the media as a representational story tends itself to define the story.

densed and transformed into a format and story line recognizable both to the media organization and to media consumers. The heritage of the technological fable, translated into media logic, means that the story must have features which "live up to" both media and mass expectations about how the story is supposed to go. In other words, media logic means that whatever the "reality" of an event, the definition of the event by the media as a representational story tends by itself to define the story. Once the situation is defined, the media story then takes on a form and content consistent with the media definition. The news process may find, accept, and magnify "facts" which are consistent with the media logic of the story.[9]

The Logic of Mass Panic and Flight

In particular, let us consider the logic of panic as part of the story. The technological fable includes as central to the story the disruption of ordinary life by the monster. The threat produces mass panic—people have to flee from the awesome power of the threat. For example, the *War of the Worlds* broadcast had panic as a part of the story. But the press reported that those people who thought the broadcast was news panicked too. Newspapers reported the "tidal wave of terror that swept the nation": New Jersey highways were said to be jammed with hysterical people, and other reports had farmers joining in vigilante groups and people everywhere praying, driving out of cities, or even committing suicide. The media image of the event was that the pseudo-news broadcast produced mass panic.

But did it? According to one calculation, only about 12 per cent of the adult population actually heard the program (the much more popular *Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy* show was opposite it), only 28 per cent of those who did hear it believed it was a real news bulletin, and all told only *2 per cent* of the population was at all excited by the program! And if panic means fear and flight, only a minute statistical fraction responded to the program by action.[10] If our thesis is correct, the press reported panic because panic there must be as part of the logic of the story.

Similarly, in 1973 Swedish radio broadcast a tale of a fictitious nuclear accident at an uncompleted nuclear power plant at Barseback. The story was typical of the technological fable. It told of a supposed failure in the plant's cooling system that resulted in a major radioactive leak which winds carried out over populated areas. Like the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, the program used a news format as if it were a bulletin, complete with sirens and well-known radio voices. Within an hour and throughout the next day, Swedish and then international news media reported that the story had resulted in a mass panic. Interestingly, while there was widespread debate in the media and Parliament about the broadcast, no one apparently ever questioned the assumption that there had in fact been a "real" panic.

But a team of sociologists later studied the effects of the broadcast in the area affected, and the results of the study told a quite different story. The study found that in the area where the alleged panic occurred, some 20 per cent of the adult population had heard the program. About 10 per cent of the population misunderstood it, 7-8 per cent were frightened, and only about 1 per cent "reacted behaviorally" to it. The researchers found not one single case of "panic flight."[11]

Yet the news media in Sweden universally assumed and reported that a panic occurred. This faulty reporting was based on the tiny fraction of the population that did such things as call police and fire stations, actions which gave the impression of mass panic. The press "picked up on" rumors passed on by firemen and other people and translated the rumors into "fact," because, we argue here, the fact of the panic conformed with the media logic of the story.

Thus a non-event, defined as consistent with the story line, helped to transform the story into what the authors of the report call a "summary event," "[an event] staged to summarize positive or functional processes or structures." The Baresback story they term a "negative summary event," one which deals with "bad" states of affairs.[12] Such a negative summary event can be placed in the tradition of the technological fable. The "panic" is part of the story as an imaginative representation by the news media of what is supposed to happen in such events. The panic made sense to newsmakers because it "fit": that is what happens in technological fables.

It is our contention that even though there were dramatic options exercised by the American mass media in the coverage of Three Mile Island, there were also thematic regularities consistent with the media logic of the technological fable. The event was defined and "summarized" by various media. The drama included much about the extent to which the event had disrupted ordinary life around the TMI plant. Both TV and print media told of the mass concern about the accident and included scenes and images of the impulse to flee and even of actual flight.

[9] David L. Althiede and Robert P. Snow, *Media Logic* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979).

[10] Karl Erik Rosnengren, Peter Arvidson, and Dahn Sturesson, "The Baresback 'Panic': A Radio Programme as a Negative Summary Event," *Acta Sociologica*, XVIII, no. 4 (1979), 303-321.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

Some of the estimates of mass flight made by the national media seem inflated, and assumptions that many thousands of people were "on the verge of panic" appear unwarranted.

ABC-TV on March 30 told of people "on the verge of panic" and of "momentary panic," with stories and interviews of people fleeing. On April 1, we were told that "many people have fled the area" and were shown shots of deserted streets. But CBS reported on the thirtieth that there was "no panic," although there was fear and confusion. NBC on the same day showed shots of fire trucks with sirens wailing driving through the streets and of people leaving the area on their own. *Time* magazine (April 9, 1979) reported that "while there was no panic, thousands of residents left the area of their own volition." The next week (April 16, 1979) *Time* told us that "100,000 or so of the area's 650,000 residents who had left started to trickle home." But *Newsweek* that same week reported that "ultimately, an estimated 60,000 residents moved out voluntarily." Thus all the media told of massive flight, although they differed as to whether there was any mass panic and on the magnitude of the flight.

Neither could the official reports entirely agree. The President's Commission staff report simply estimated that a "sizeable minority of the residents" left the area, and that "on Friday . . . much of the population began to leave Middletown voluntarily." The Report of the Governor's Commission spoke of the "voluntary large-scale exodus of area citizens after the governor's advisory," but noted only 171 people who were sheltered and cared for at centers established to help those who had fled. A study of mental-health effects of the accident for the President's Commission estimated that "at least 150,000 people left the area." When the Kemeny Report was released, newspapers still varied in their estimates. The *Chicago Tribune* estimated that "50,000 persons packed up and left" (October 31, 1979).

Did Mass Flight Actually Occur?

But contacts by the author with some local media and local police and civil defense authorities cast doubt on all these flight figures. Clippings provided by the Lebanon, Pa. *News* include a headline from March 29: "No Panic Noted in Wake of Nuclear Crisis at TMI," and another from April 6, "Realtors Report No Panic Selling Since TMI Crisis." The Lebanon County Emergency Management facility noted that it had "very little movement" over the incident, and its director estimated that approximately 5 per cent of the population in that county left, about 1,800 people. The Pennsylvania State Police noted that traffic that weekend in the counties around the plant did not seem unusually heavy. Local police officials in the towns with about 13,000 people within a five-mile radius of the plant claimed no extraordinary exodus. And in the four directly-adjacent counties (York, population 272,603; Dauphin 223,834; Lancaster 319,693; and Cumberland, 167,340), officials noted no mass exodus. Given the size of such populations, mass panic or flight would certainly have been noticeable.

So was the flight from TMI real or imagined? In the absence of a systematic study, it is difficult to say. How the various media came up with their figures and images of mass flight is not known. It should be noted that they did not consistently emphasize the dimension of flight, and indeed they often said that there was no panic. But some of their figures do seem inflated, and assumptions that many thousands of people were "on the verge of panic" appear unwarranted.

More study is required as to how and why people around the plant decided *not* to flee. It appears to be the case that a rumor spread through the surrounding towns on March 30 that the plant was about to explode, destroying everything for miles around. But apparently this rumor did not cause panic or flight; it was probably dampened by a televised statement by Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman Harold Denton and by Governor Richard Thornburgh's rumor control center.[13]

[13] Ralph L. Rosnow and Allan J. Kimmel, "Lives of a Rumor," *Psychology Today* (June, 1979), p. 88.

One retrospective article declared that at TMI "more than 150,000 people fled their homes in terror" and that "the flight was chaotic and uncontrolled." Maybe next time it will be.

It also appears to be the case that some people around the plant experienced "demoralization" and deep fears and anxieties. But again the statistics do not seem to reveal mass crisis. Thirty per cent of the population reported themselves as "quite upset" following the accident, and 10 per cent experienced increased stress symptoms. This means that 90 per cent of the people did *not* have increased stress symptoms (and some of those who did might have had them regardless of the accident) and 70 per cent were not particularly upset.[14]

TMI and the Technological Fable

If our notion is correct that TMI is a story in the tradition of the technological fable, we must also assess the media's role in the lack of panic around the plant. The various media reporting the accident were not consistent in their definition of the story. A consistent story line across all major media that the plant was about to explode might have contributed to panic. But local media (influenced perhaps by the power company public-relations office) and some national media resisted to varying degrees the logic of the technological fable. With multiple and conflicting stories as to what was happening, the confused local resident did not receive a clear message to flee.

But perhaps, too, we have to take into account the fact that TMI was, as the press continually said, "unprecedented." People couldn't be certain that TMI was in fact a new addition to the technological fable, and the "monster" was not quite palpable. The popular aesthetics of the fable requires something more precisely identifiable than TMI offered. *The Nation* (April 21, 1979) noted that residents in the area "faced the radioactive fallout and threat of complete annihilation with a suicidal grace, calmly resigning themselves to the situation regardless of the consequences . . . gallows humor such as 'I'll melt before I leave' displaced much of the fear and brought the people together to share the common experience. . . . The people there were determined not to be driven out by an unseen enemy. . . . Most of the residents didn't believe what they couldn't see. . . . The dreamlike quality of the fear, the unseen assassin in the night ready to strike this fragile city down with a cloud of clear vapor brought the people together for comfort and safety."

Journalistic rhetoric aside, this passage communicates a sense that the unseen quality of the threat made it less real than, say, invading Martians or smog monsters. But the insidious nature of radiation has apparently left a residue of fear in the neighborhood: locals still blame physical and emotional stress on the plant, and rumors circulate about how cancer will develop in children within five years and how animals near the plant are born with brittle bones, blindness, and other radiation-caused maladies.

On the other hand, the quietistic reaction of the population may also be attributable to "learned helplessness."[15] This argument suggests that because the evening news and other media sources so routinely emphasize dramas of chaos, disaster, and unpredictability, people finally develop a sense of impotence and resignation in the face of events they cannot hope to control. Perhaps the TMI story, although immediate and threatening, caused no panic and flight because people had learned helplessness in the face of disaster and simply took a fatalistic attitude, as evidenced in the "nuclear jokes."

In any case, the TMI tale is now part of the folklore of technology, and any future story has a precedent in this episode which will affect how it will be reported. Perhaps mass acquaintance with the media drama of TMI would contribute to people's reaction to another accident. Perhaps the media would expect another accident to be worse and would look for panic and flight to occur. Reporting of panic and flight might then contribute to actual mass panic and flight, since that would seem to be the response appropriate to the drama. Or perhaps people would react, like the TMI residents, with quietude and fatalism.

A paper delivered at the American Culture Association convention last year asked whether the impact of the *War of the Worlds* broadcast could be repeated and offered helpful hints as to how it might be. The author suggested that "a Three-Mile-Island-type incident would work well, because it might present an imminent danger to people over a vast part of the country."[16] Since TMI, that is clearly a possibility, since the media have incorporated that accident into the tradition of technological fantasy that is part of popular media logic. On the first anniversary of the TMI accident, various media recalled the incident, keeping alive the folklore about it. One article declared that at TMI "more than 150,000 people fled their homes in terror. The flight was chaotic and uncontrolled."[17] Maybe next time it will be.

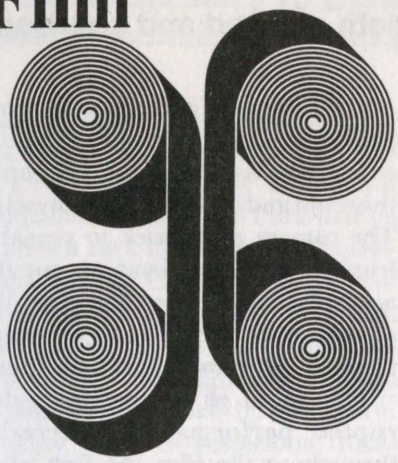
[14] Bruce Dohrensend, "Nuclear Health Effects of the Nuclear Accident at Three Mile Island," symposium overview at meeting of American Psychological Assn., 1980; James Coates, "Three Mile Island Still Getting on Folks' Nerves," *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1980, sec. 2, p. 12.

[15] Grace Ferrari Levine, "'Learned Helplessness' and the Evening News," *Journal of Communication*, XXVII, no. 4 (Autumn, 1977), 100-105.

[16] F. Dale Ware, "War of the Worlds: Could It Happen Again," delivered at the American Culture Association meeting, 1980, p. 4.

[17] Casey Bukro, "Accident at TMI put Nuclear Power on Hold," *Chicago Tribune*, March 28, 1980, p. 4.

Film



Two brilliant film comedies share Carole Lombard, the only great actress ever born in Fort Wayne.

Carole Lombard and The World-as-Stage

Richard Maxwell

Two of the most brilliant American film comedies are *Twentieth Century* (1934) and *To Be or Not to Be* (1942). These movies share Carole Lombard, the only great actress ever born in Fort Wayne, Indiana. They also share a theme, that the world is a stage. It was for Lombard, who made forty-two films during her short career. *Twentieth Century* began her stardom. *To Be or Not to Be* ended it: she died in a plane crash soon after its filming. Her professional life is thus framed by the world-as-stage topos, a coincidence I find suggestive. Life is short, art is long. My subject is not just Lombard but the thriving of an ancient idea in an age of chaos.

If we've read some Shakespeare, we are likely to remember that the world can be imagined a stage. Ernst Robert Curtius's magisterial *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948) reveals how venerable that commonplace is. It can be traced back to Plato and St. Paul among others. It is handed down through the Middle Ages to the great figures of the Renaissance. It achieves a kind of apotheosis in the seventeenth-century dramas of Calderon, "the first poet to make the God-directed *theatrum mundi* the subject of a sacred drama." After Calderon, the world-as-stage topos seems pretty well used up—until Hofmannsthal gets hold of it in the early twentieth century. It then begins an extraordinary revival. Curtius's interpretation of this point is crucial. He notes that while Calderon wrote in a time when God and the state apparently stood firm, "Hofmannsthal's historical situation is the very reverse." Hofmannsthal lived through the dissolution of an aging society. His many plays and poems comparing the world and the stage attempt (alas, with only partial success) to recover a lost tradition. Works like *The Great Salzburg Theater of the World* (1921) express Hofmannsthal's willed faith in the idea of a Providential universe, where God is a puppet master of sorts.

Enter Carole Lombard. She would have looked out of place in *The Great Salzburg Theater of the World.* In *Twentieth Century* (filmed some five years after Hofmannsthal died) she was right at home. Written by Ben Hecht and directed by Howard Hawks, the film casts John Barrymore as Oscar Jaffe, a grandiloquent stage director. He discovers the Lombard character, makes her into a great actress (stage name Lily Garland), makes her his mistress too, then loses her on both counts because he is insanely possessive of her. All this happens in the first reel: by the second Jaffe is down the tubes. He has acquired some perverse notions about culture and insists on staging one absurd historical drama after another. None of them have Garland, all of them fail. The final disaster is *Joan of Arc*—a horrendous spectacle play, of the sort Shaw had avoided writing a few years before. *Joan* closes in Chicago and leaves its backers ruined.[1] Jaffe's only chance for solvency is to reacquire Lily Garland's services.

Immediately he has his opportunity, for they both end up on the Twentieth Century Limited. Lily Garland is now a movie star; she will have to be won back to the theater by the most deviously theatrical means. During the course of their train journey together, Jaffe stages one absurd scene after another. Garland is alternatively mad and amused. Nothing, she asserts, could possibly convince her to work again under Jaffe. Each of them strikes magnificently theatrical poses; each is consumed by a self-indulgent passion for role-playing. Towards the end of the film there is a great scene in which he almost breaks down her resistance. He conceives the idea that Lily Garland will play Mary Magdalene in a multi-million dollar staging of the New Testament. This cannot help but be Lily's greatest role ever. The Crucifixion—during which she will weep at the foot of the cross—will be staged with incredible historical authenticity, including *real camels.* When he mentions the camels, Barrymore is so enthusiastic that he virtually becomes one, snorting and swaying his way across Lily's room. The absurdity of the whole proposition dawns on her, for after briefly taking him seriously she bursts into laughter.

Jaffe's last attempt on her is played in a different mood. He has been wounded in the shoulder by a

[1] In the Preface to *Saint Joan* (1924), Shaw writes of certain "proposals" for improving his play: "The experienced knights of the blue pencil . . . would at once proceed to waste two hours in building elaborate scenery, having real water in the river Loire and a real bridge across it, and staging an obviously sham fight for possession of it, with the victorious French led by Joan on a real horse. Joan would be burnt on stage . . . on the principle that it does not matter in the least why a woman is burnt provided she is burnt, and people can pay to see it done." Exactly the kind of thinking that Hecht satirized in the figure of Jaffe.

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In Howard Hawks' *Twentieth Century*, the connection between world and stage is perceived primarily as a joke—a joke by which we are both amused and seduced.

gunshot, for reasons too complex to explain. With the help of his cohorts, he sets up a little death scene. Garland is called to the bedside by what she takes to be a dying man. He has . . . one last request, purely sentimental. Will she sign a contract with him, so that for a moment things will be just as they were in the old days? Garland has evidently read too many scripts like this one. She has come to believe the clichés of the theatrical death scene. Confusing melodrama and life she signs, whereupon Jaffe cries out triumphantly. Once again she is working for him. The show must go on.

The film would work if we didn't know a thing about the actors, the director, and the circumstances of production. All the same, this extrinsic knowledge proves relevant. Lombard the actress was in the position of the character she played: both were young women on the verge of stardom, both capable (at first) of stiffening up during rehearsal. In the film this point is made by Jaffe's inimitable directorial technique: to loosen up Lily for her first stage scream, he jabs a pin in her rear. Sure enough, she screams convincingly. There is, it turns out, an equivalent story about Lombard and Hawks. He took her aside "and asked what *she* would do if a monomaniac like the Barrymore character tried to push her around in the manner outlined in the script. Lombard told Hawks she'd never put up with such treatment. Hawks told her to return to the set and play the character as Carole Lombard. The rest, as they say, is history."[2] Maybe this happened, maybe it didn't. The fact remains that films like *Twentieth Century* generate stories of this sort. Having accepted the interdependency of stage and world, we want it to hold on every level possible. Like Lily Garland, we accept performance as truth. Like Oscar Jaffe, we crave real camels. Not only does the world become a stage, the stage expands to encompass the world.

Twentieth Century is a film disconnected from history and society by the very self-absorption of its principals, so that the connection between world and stage is perceived primarily as a joke—a joke by which we are both amused and seduced. The same is true of *To Be or Not to Be,* except that here the joke has taken on serious consequences. How could it not, when the subject is Hitler's invasion of Poland? The director Ernst Lubitsch had come to Hollywood in 1923. For two decades afterwards he was the premier maker of sophisticated comedies, specializing in the elusive "Lubitsch touch." World War II was not the most hospitable moment for this artist. It was then, nonetheless, that Lubitsch—with his assistant Melchior Lengyel—put together *To Be or Not to Be,* the film often considered his finest.

Here, as in *Twentieth Century,* Carole Lombard is at the center of a comedy about world and stage—but what a difference those eight years have made! This time the Lombard character is actually married to a ham: Jack Benny, playing Josef Tura, the greatest actor in Poland. Their troupe plans to mount a production attacking Hitler, when all of a sudden the Nazis invade. The theater shuts down. About the same time, a Nazi spy, posing as one Professor Siletsky, acquires information that will cost many lives unless it can be immediately retrieved. This is the dilemma which faces the Turas. Using such actorly skills as they can, they must somehow keep Siletsky from delivering his fatal message.

So described, *To Be* sounds like a World War II melodrama. It is nothing of the sort. This is evident in the first scenes, when the camera focusses on Nazi officials interrogating a little boy about his parents' political beliefs. Hitler's imminent arrival is announced. He enters the room and declares "Heil myself!" The camera pulls back to reveal a frustrated director bawling out the actor who perpetrated this line. We are witnessing the Benny/Lombard troupe's rehearsals for their play.

This motif of the comically-disrupted performance will recur throughout the film. At first, it is primarily associated with a sexual battle between Tura and his wife. She has an ungovernable affection for young Polish pilots, the most irresistible of whom is played by a boyish Robert Stack. Mrs. T arranges for a dressing-room rendezvous with Stack on the following terms: he is to leave the audience when her husband—who is playing Hamlet—begins the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Stack gets up to move out; Benny/Tura simply stares at him, words frozen in his mouth. His expression is that of a man who cannot comprehend what he sees. No less than Barrymore in *Twentieth Century,* this character has a fragile but persisting ego. Theatrical and sexual mastery are often interchangeable for him. It is a typical joke of the film that his public humiliation as an actor should be matched by a private infidelity he does not as yet suspect.

Once the Nazis arrive in Warsaw, these problems of Tura's are further magnified. His wife plays Mata Hari to Professor Siletsky, meeting the professor at his hotel for drinks, dinner, and who knows what else in an effort to locate the incriminating documents. Their Idyll is interrupted when Siletsky is called away to what looks like Nazi headquarters. He is actually in the hands of fake Nazis, real actors. Assuming his responsibilities as the greatest actor in Poland, Tura pretends to be the Nazi commander Colonel Ehrhardt. He must stall Siletsky until his wife can search the professor's belong-

[2] Louis Giannetti, *Masters of the American Cinema* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), p. 190, with a wonderful publicity still from *Twentieth Century.*

In Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be*, we see comedy moralized and history theatricalized.

ings. There ensues an amazing dialogue. It cannot be very well described; one can only single out moments. Siletsky tells Tura that he is known back in Berlin as "Concentration Camp Ehrhardt," a piece of news which inspires them both with merriment. "So they call me Concentration Camp Ehrhardt?" Tura repeats, ever more irrelevantly. Siletsky becomes suspicious. Realizing that he has been duped, he pulls a gun on Tura and rushes out a convenient door—into the darkened theater. There follows a complicated chase, which culminates in a beautifully-choreographed bit where Siletsky is shot on stage, in a spotlight. This crossing of theater and world proves fatal to its dupe.

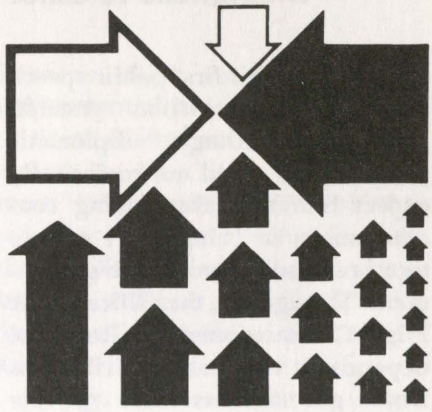
Having unintentionally dispatched Siletsky, Tura must assume his identity. Appropriately disguised, he proceeds to Siletsky's hotel, which his wife will not be able to leave until the professor returns. Here Tura meets the real Colonel Ehrhardt (who has never seen the real Siletsky). Tura is forced to reenact the dialogue he just had with Siletsky, only this time, of course, he is playing the professor's part. From this point on, the viewer is drawn into an intrigue which is crazy because it is also logical. The culmination of the madness comes in a scene about corpses and false mustaches which I would hesitate to unravel. Let it only be said that Benny, Lombard, and the whole troupe eventually end up in England. The last we see of them, he is again playing Hamlet and she once more sets a meeting with an aspiring lover during "To be or not to be." The more things change in this marriage, the more they stay the same.

In a generally excellent book on film comedy, Gerald Mast complains that the later Lubitsch became less cynical, more sentimental than before, so reducing his style to mush.[3] I disagree. In *To Be or Not to Be*, at any rate, Lubitsch retained his flair for farcical love intrigues and delicate parables about life versus art. He also gave his work a new scope. Comedy is moralized, history theatricalized. The film benefits from both transformations. Imagining the world as a stage means imagining its coherence and perhaps its controllability. If not Providential, then at least human intelligence is celebrated. The film recalls something of the brilliant cynicism displayed by Hawks and Hecht in *Twentieth Century*. The two hammy leads are still rivals in an absurd struggle for primacy. Now, however, there is something important to fight about and to win through. The world becomes a stage from a genuinely collective need.

Twentieth Century, of course, is not the only possible reference point by which we can judge the extent of Lubitsch's success. We can return, finally, to Curtius and Hofmannsthal. The former writes of the 1940s, "When the German catastrophe came, I decided to serve the idea of a medievalistic Humanism by studying the Latin literature of the Middle Ages." It is doubtful that he got to many movies while doing this, but how fascinated he might have been with *To Be or Not to Be*. To some extent Lubitsch and Curtius's revered Hofmannsthal emerge from the same central European dramatic tradition, for both worked with the great Max Reinhardt and both cultivated a certain stylish decadence. Far more than Hofmannsthal's rather precious pastiches, *To Be or Not to Be* affirms the power of an ancient topos in a modern context. It bears out, in fact, precisely that faith which Curtius affirmed by writing his book: that ideas are worth remembering, that they can help us keep our heads. The world-as-stage defines more than Carole Lombard's career.

[3] *The Comic Mind: Comedy and the Movies* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 224, a classic example of an excellent writer pushing a thesis too far.

The Nation



A Modest Address

Our Record on Refugees Is Surprisingly Good

Albert R. Trost

The speaker at Valparaiso University's commencement this past May was Poul Hartling, the United Nations' high commissioner for refugees. His talk was entitled "Refugees—Our Neighbors." The speech did what a commencement address is supposed to do, call on the graduates to be responsible citizens of the world, be concerned for their neighbors, and sacrifice for the greater good of mankind.

The speech was delivered in an eloquent and dignified manner, what one would expect from a world statesman. Very few in the audience would have perceived it as stirring, or even controversial. One colleague was heard to remark that "he really did not say anything new." I am sure that many thought that we were clearly upstaged on that Sunday afternoon by our close neighbor, the University of Notre Dame. In South Bend, President

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American refugee policy indicates real movement towards fairness, flexibility, and a willingness to defer to international organizations. It seems truly "progressive."

Reagan made his first public speech since the assassination attempt.

Given Hartling's diplomatic position, one could not realistically expect him to make ringing condemnations or bring grave offense to a host audience or their government. His agency, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, depends on voluntary contributions from governments and private organizations. The United States is the largest contributor. In his speech on that Sunday afternoon, Hartling commended Americans for their generosity, though few in the audience would have known any of the details about the extent or the nature of our giving. In fact, few would have known of the existence of Mr. Hartling's agency. (The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Mr. Hartling's office has presumably changed that.) Mr. Hartling did say that other nations were generous also, perhaps even more generous than the United States in proportion to their resources.

But the speech contained very little in the way of condemnation. Mr. Hartling seemed content to make the audience aware of the problem, the world's refugees. The problem, he said, was that "refugees need to be fed, clothed and sheltered. They need to find new homes, if they cannot return to their old ones, and to be assisted to attain self-sufficiency in them."

To make the problem more graphic to his audience of affluent graduates, their parents, and faculty, he went on to say, "I do not overlook the problems and difficulties facing the industrialized countries. Newspapers speak to you of discontentment over economic conditions, unemployment, and inflation. I have no doubt the refugees would love to have those problems, the problems of affluence rather than of deprivation, of surplus rather than want." He probably gauged this audience of middle-class Americans correctly; for them, awareness of the problem was a major step forward.

At least one listener, of somewhat liberal inclinations and with some exposure to critical academic studies of American foreign policy, was sure that only Mr. Hartling's sensitive political and diplomatic position kept him from being much harsher in judging American response. Determined to uncover some underlying negligence, shortsightedness, mean partisanship, or national selfishness, I put some library research on my agenda for the following weeks.

Did the consideration of the refugee problem in Washington stir up the intense partisanship of, say, food-stamp funding? Certainly the Reagan administration could be expected to lower the priority of this kind of program? Since solutions to the refugee problem seemed to require a heavy commitment to the United Nations, was the issue not discussed in the heated context of internationalism versus isolationism? Might there not even be an occasional reactive expression of racism from a public officeholder? I was surprised to find that few of my expectations were met.

To begin with, there is very little national debate over refugees. The Cuban exodus of a year ago is an exception in that there was considerable debate over how to handle the problem of settlement. Interestingly, the Cubans probably do not even qualify as refugees under the United Nations use of that term, and this unexpected migration did little to change the nature of the debate in the United States. To say that there is little debate is to indicate that there is little attention given in any public forum to the question. The typical pattern is to give the question cursory notice in budget hearings before the relevant Congressional committees. This is usually in the form of testimony by the responsible executive-branch official. It is rare for other witnesses to be called. It is even more rare for there to be hostile questioning by committee members.

The fact of little national debate also points up the seeming consensus on the policy question. This consensus is evident among members of Congress as well as between Congress and the executive branch. One is struck by the rather remarkable agreement between Senator Edward Kennedy and Senator Strom Thurmond on the basic outline of the Refugee Act of 1980. There is also the simultaneous advocacy of a policy by Congressman Derwinski (R., Illinois) on the one hand and Congresswoman Holtzman (D., New York) on the other. With respect to appropriations in the refugee area, Congress appears to be quite willing to go along with the suggestions of the Reagan administration. In the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, the Carter administration followed the policy leads of Senator Kennedy.

The record of American refugee policy also indicates some real movement in that policy towards fairness, flexibility, and a willingness to defer to international organizations. In other words, the policy seems to be truly "progressive." In the past refugees were treated as immigrants and the old quotas with regard to country of origin prevailed. Of course, exceptions were often granted when ideological concerns (Hungarians) or humanitarian concerns seemed to dictate.

The Refugee Act of 1980, the most recent statement of policy, recognizes that refugees are different from other immigrants, having been forced to leave their country, and grants to them a separate and much-expanded yearly quota (50,000). Exceptions to this ceiling can be granted more quickly than previously had been the case. An explicit asylum provision is

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included in the immigration law for the first time. The definition of a refugee is considerably broadened from that used in previous laws and made to conform to the standard used by the United Nations. Our older understanding of refugees applied only to those "from Communism" and some areas of the Middle East. The new definition and quota potentially cover every area of the world. Finally, the law attempts to mandate better co-ordination of refugee policy by setting up new administrative machinery, the Office of the United States Co-ordinator for Refugee Affairs and the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The latter focuses on implementation of policy through government aid for settling refugees in this country.

The record of the United States in handling some real refugee problems in the last few years, even without the new law, is laudable. The most impressive feature is the quantity of refugees settled in the United States. In 1979, 200,000 were placed, almost all of them coming from Southeast Asia or Russia and Eastern Europe. The migration in the latter case was mainly of Jews. 114,000 Cubans came shortly after. Another admirable feature in the resettling of these refugees was the prominent and effective role played by voluntary agencies. Eleven voluntary agencies did most of the resettling with the aid of government grants. Six of the eleven were church-related. Besides being compatible with a liberal ethic that devalues the growth of government, the use of voluntary agencies involves a large segment of the society in the solution to the problem.

At least at the level of public policy, the response to the refugee problem seems almost unbelievable. It certainly is atypical to have so much consensus and so little vehement debate. Is the policy machinery working as the abstract models say it should? If it is working well, it certainly will face greater tests in the future. Just as Dr. Hartling's address at the commencement was for many the first intrusion of the refugee problem, so throughout the country public awareness of the refugee dilemma is only beginning. The Indochinese, Cuban, and Haitian migrations are only very recent developments.

The acceptance of the first of these may have benefited from some feelings of guilt over involvement in Southeast Asia. The second, the Cuban, can be covered by a general hostility to the Castro regime. However, there are between ten and twelve million refugees in the world right now! That three to four million of these are in Africa will be news to almost all Americans. The policy machinery will suffer a much greater test here in both the numbers involved and the distance from direct American interests and concern. Resettlement in the United States will probably not arise as a viable solution to the African problem, but American resources will be called on because we are the supplier of over one-quarter of the funds for international agencies involved in solving refugee problems.

There are other demands which will enter the debate as public awareness expands and interest groups form over the allocation of resources in this area. Our own disadvantaged will demand justice in the face of what is perceived as privileged treatment for new entrants. There was a hint of this in the Cuban migration. Rivalries will emerge between the different groups of resettled refugees over the treatment of members of their families who have still not emigrated. A widespread racial and cultural preservationist backlash has not yet emerged among Americans to these recent migrations. However, there was a hint of the ugly potential here in the reaction to South Vietnamese refugee fishermen on the Texas coast. The most conspicuous feature of the reaction was the involvement of the Ku Klux Klan. Greater numbers of refugees in the United States will challenge our tolerance.

Finally, to deal with the large numbers of refugees now in only temporary havens or countries of first asylum, the concerned United Nations agencies—the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (for the Palestinian refugees) will require a greater amount of authority and a much larger grant of funds. The amount of money so far involved in the American budget for aid to these international agencies, about $215 million, is so small in relation to other claims that it has not yet prompted open conflict. However, the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees alone has grown over 500 per cent in the last five years. With this kind of growth and with an American commitment to supply about 28 per cent of the budget, challenges to this commitment become more likely.

The High Commissioner's missionary journey into Indiana was welcome, even if it was greeted with a few yawns. The goals he set for himself on his visit were modest in view of the large problems with which he must deal. He wanted to spread public awareness of the refugee problem and give some encouragement to Americans in their past and continuing efforts on behalf of the refugees. He is an optimistic man, a modest man who possesses a personal record loaded with significant accomplishments. He thought that his day at Valparaiso had been a useful one.

Campus Diary

Rumblings from a Dormant Volcano

John Strietelmeier

One of the chief difficulties I have in writing this column is that I can never venture beyond the platitude line into any area of serious criticism without seeming to be attacking some good, personal friend.

All of my life, I have been blessed with a wide circle of friends. The great majority of them are or have been academics like myself. That is to say, they (we) have been—along with confidence men, North Atlantic steamship gamblers, patent-medicine salesmen, claimants to imperial Russian titles of nobility, and advertising executives—people who live by their (our) wits. Folk wisdom, which is rarely mistaken in identifying potential dangers to the survival of the human species, long ago—and for the best of practical reasons—identified such people as among those not to be trusted with any large voice in the making of those decisions by which societies live. And critics have found them ideal as specimens for social or moral dissection because not only do they display a wide range of interesting faults and eccentricities, but do so more patently and more transparently than do people of most other social and moral strata.

Most of my very closest friends are clustered in a lens of the academic stratum known as academic administration. These include five college and university presidents, past and present; four chief academic officers, also past and present (plus myself on those days when I am on friendly terms with myself); a couple of other kinds of vice-president; a passel of deans, academic and otherwise; and a slew (also slue, fr. Irish *sluagh*) of department chairpersons.

Which is all by way of exculpatory preface to the main thrust of this column, which is a reflection on that most sacred of academic humbugs, the curriculum.

We at Valparaiso have just welcomed back from the land of the walking dead a select committee of our most respected colleagues. They had gone there—may Heaven forgive me—on my recommendation in the last months of my academic vice-presidency when, having no more rabbits to pull out of my sleeve, there seemed to be no other way to give an impression of activity than to fiddle with the curriculum. Their assignment was to fiddle with the general education requirements.

It's like the thing writers do when they really can't think of anything to say and aren't yet ready to get down to the hard business of pumping their red blood onto the white sheet in the typewriter. First they will open (or close) windows. Then they sharpen pencils. Then, perhaps, clean the typewriter. Then check the paper supply, perhaps even double-checking to make sure that all of the sheets are actually 8½ by 11 inches. Anything, in other words, to delay that awful moment when they have to bleed that first drop of blood onto the white page.

So it is in academia. Teaching is hard work, very hard. Research, while often more fun, is still very hard and it consumes hours like minutes. Counseling chews up your insides. And writing will (obviously) drive you mad.

The institutional device for postponing that awful moment when it simply can no longer put off addressing itself to these hard jobs is fiddling with the curriculum. And to ensure that nobody suspects that it is an evasive strategy, institutions summon their best people to direct the enterprise. You don't find the institution's cadre of certified losers on the Committee to Reinvent the University, or whatever its local name may be. What you assemble for this task is a sample of that priceless element of the faculty which, if left alone, might, by sheer professional achievement, lead the institution on to distinction.

And the revisions which they recommend will indeed almost always be a significant improvement over what the institution was doing before. Basic presuppositions can not, of course, be attacked. They have all long since been intertwined with departmental self-interests which, like God's mercies, "shall endure when suns and moons shall shine no more." But within every curriculum there are areas where fiddling does not really enrage anybody and persuasive arguments can be made for the committee's view that a particular change would be an improvement.

If one were to suggest that nobody has ever really learned anything that he/she did not really want to learn, it might call into question the whole curriculum-building enterprise. So that suggestion is not likely to be made. You revise a curriculum for the same reasons that you climb Mt. Everest or take out the garbage: because it's there.

And, of course, because if there were no curricula to prescribe what courses students must take, the little rascals would probably go wandering about listening only to those of us who seem to have something to say. And that, we will all agree, is no way to run a university.

More on this next month. Unless, of course, that crowd out there with the tar bucket and the sack of feathers is looking for me.